



明月千里
SENRI AKATSUKI

●春田歩

AYUMU
KASUGA

UNDEFEATED
BAHAMUT
CHRONICLE

最弱の敗
機超必殺

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Novel Illustrations

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Prologue – False Mask

If looking from the conclusion, there was no god or anything for her.

—

『Rosa, god won't abandon those who live correctly.』

『It doesn't matter what kind of situation you are in, you have to abide by the law. That's how a human must live.』

She was also different from any peace loving idiot.

But, she believed that both her parents must be really happy people.

After all, they were preaching such prayers towards their only daughter until the day they were miserably betrayed and died.

—

The Seven Dragon Paladin of the Heiburg Republic, the one known as The Steel Witch.

Rosa Granhide woke up early in the morning and looked down at the townscape of the capital from the window of the government building while still naked.

The state of the city where tall buildings made from stone were lining up in an awe-inspiring sight displayed its splendor.

But at the same time, the slum that was spreading at the other side with a single wall separating it from the other areas, also entered her eyes. She could see humans gathering in large numbers living inside an inferior environment and a public order like animals.

Heiburg's capital, Hidehelm was a strange city.

From a glance the city looked prosperous, while the neighborhood right

beside it was completely in a bad state.

Those who plunder and were plundered from.

The strong and the weak.

The wolf and the sheep.

A scenery that was like the world's microcosm could be seen from the window's frame.

The Heiburg Republic was famous as a large military country, but even before a certain arms dealer appeared, there were already the signs of polarization.

Due to their friction with the Old Arcadia Empire, Heiburg was forced to accept an unreasonable treaty, and due to a Ragnarok—Poseidon, dealing a large blow to them, the country rapidly prioritized their military strengthening.

In order to excavate treasure from the Ruin Gigas that existed inside their territory, soldier conscription was intensified and taxes were levied.

Rosa's parents who opposed war were one day captured as criminals who plotted treachery against the country and they were imprisoned—and executed.

When Rosa enquired about the situation later, she found out that it was the citizens, who were also feeling dissatisfaction towards the country's despotic administration, who secretly reported her parents for the reward money.

Rosa who was a child at that time was helpless.

The situation didn't turn for the better at all with only the righteousness that she believed in.

She was thrown into prison, received torture, then when she was about to die, a person from the military purchased her. That person taught her something.

「—It's something like that after all. Those people had no power.」

Rosa made a smile under her red hair while pulling in the Sword Device beside her pillow.

「Both my parents were just scared of straying from their path. People without

wit or strength, in the end they can only cling to worthless things like 『being upright』.]

It could be god, country, or hero.

『When the weak is looking for help from anyone, doesn't matter who, they won't be able to receive help if they are evil. Thus what is called goodness is—nothing more than escapism to satisfy their naïve thinking that they will be able to receive protection, salvation from someone just and proper.』

Rosa continued to speak her words bit by bit where she was answering her own question.

Something like justice wouldn't be of any use against evil.

If one didn't rule, they would only get their possessions taken away by the stronger evil.

Rosa who learned from her failure received education and lived until now in order to implement every kind of evil.

Her philosophy was the proof of her status as the strong.

『King of Vices—it's not bad being called that.』

The shadowy existence who ruled this Heiburg from more than ten years ago.

Rosa murmured the name of the strong person who manipulated the military from the shadows and dirtied their hands with every kind of evil deed.

Obtaining the Divine Drag-Ride Gorynych and getting chosen as a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins were also nothing more than footholds so that she could stand even higher as an even more powerful person.

She already formed the groundwork in order to crush the hostile New Kingdom and for Heiburg to take back its strength.

She won in the skill exhibition battle against the New Kingdom as Heiburg's representative, and obtained the right to investigate the Ruin nearby Triport, the port city within the New Kingdom's territory, for a month.

The conquering of the first Ruin, Babel, that was the target had already been started by Heiburg's Drag-Knights who arrived at the port city.

The calamity of world destruction called Sacred Eclipse.

The arrival to Avalon could stop it.

For that sake, it was necessary to exterminate the remaining five Ragnarok, obtain the crystals called Grand Force, and install them into the deepest parts of the Ruins, but—

「There is no choice of letting this chance go. The strength of the New Kingdom can be taken away greatly through the process of conquering Babel. If the Abyss or Ragnarok in the Ruin is stimulated and let loose upon the city, those guys won't get off with just light damage.」

Stopping the end of the world due to the Sacred Eclipse by cooperating with other countries.

That was only natural, but thinking of the aftermath too was also the viewpoint of a statesman.

First, she would obtain accomplishments in front of that bunch called the Lords and take the lead in getting rewards.

At the same time she would damage the other countries' battle strength in the process of conquering the Ruins, weakening them.

Her plan had already started.

After Rosa chuckled and her lips burst into a grin, she gulped the water poured into her glass.

Right after that. *Knock knock* Along with that sound, the room's door was knocked.

「Lady Rosa. Are you awake?」

「You are permitted. Come in.」

「Ye, yes. Excuse m—.....-!？」

With a click, the door knob was turned and a maid who was still young entered.

When she saw Rosa who was standing naked near the window and Rosa's aide Callesia who was sleeping similarly naked on the bed, her cheeks were

tinged red.

「What business do you have? If you want to play with us, then I'll welcome you though?」

Rosa made a sticky smile and told the maid teasingly.

But, the maid waved both her hands in panic and hurriedly said her business.

「Tha, that's! It seems the transport of the last goods have finished! The participation ticket for the Underground Market has been distributed too.」

「My, thanks for your hard work. Is there anything out of place I wonder?」

「No, there is no problem. Rather than that—what should we do with that person? That's, about the girl's elder sister who was working at the bar in the eastern district quarter seven.」

There was a girl who was used as collateral for her parents' debt, but when they failed to repay it, the girl along with her family attempted to escape at night but then they were captured.

「Let's make her into merchandise as planned. Her looks and her bloodline are also nothing special, so I think she can be used for that medicine experiment isn't it?」

「Understand, stood.....」

The maid nodded with a pale face while leaving the room.

Inside the paperwork, a catalogue of the commodities that Heiburg currently handled was placed.

Starting from Drag-Rides, there were also goods of weapons, parts, and blueprints variety.

Goods related to Drag-Rides were immensely valuable, it was absurd to do something like selling battle strength to another country, but Heiburg managed to secure a stockpile due to a certain situation under the surface.

Thanks to them colluding with the Black Marketeer Hayes in the past, they had a slight superiority in regards to military strength related to the Ruins.

They didn't announce it publicly, but they were also circulating weapons to

the organizations of other countries too.

The woman on the bed lifted up her body and rubbed her eyes sleepily, then she turned her face towards the other girl.

「This time there will also be the transaction with Dragon Marauder. Be careful more than usual against the insects from outside.」

「.....Yes.」

The woman who was the absolute ruler in this place warned the girl who was serving her. The girl nodded powerlessly.

The dinner party of the Underground Market that would be held by the King of Vices would be a place to secure connections with influential government officials, at the same time it would also be a place to sell illegal commodities.

There was no option to cancel it even in the situation where the tension between countries was heightening.

No, far from that, it was exactly in this transaction that the key to conquering the New Kingdom's Babel could be grasped.

- Shiver*, the girl's body was trembling.

The absolute ruler, the woman who noticed that pulled that body close to her and whispered.

「Is it scary? To hurt a lot of people and then getting resented by someone? Don't worry—as long as you are at the side of 『evil』, as long as you are standing in the ruling side, you won't have anything taken away from you.」

「But.....」

「The last friend that you have—surely also wishes for that. You will be able to meet her again soon, depending on your work this time.」

The woman covered the girl's body with her body once more and her hand crawled on the girl's skin.

The magic in the form of brainwashing was applied on the girl once more.

Episode 1 – Honeymoon With A Childhood Friend

Part 1

The horse coach was shaking with clattering sound.

The rhythmical sound played by the horse's hooves and the sound of the wheels rolling on the stone pavement.

A voice suddenly came from the front when the people inside the coach were entrusting their bodies to that peaceful tune.

「Master! Master Rudy! We are going to arrive soon. How are you feeling?」

「N, nn.....master who—!?Ah, yeah! It was pleasant.」

Because he was sleepy, Lux was puzzled for a moment about what the person was talking about, but he quickly came back to his senses in surprise and replied back in agreement.

When he straightened his back and stared outside the canopy, the scenery of a tall townscape made from stone which made him feel the gravity of the city's history, came into view.

The capital of the Heiburg Republic, the castle town Hidehelm.

Lux arrived at this city after a trip of three days from the New Kingdom.

「Are you alright with the inn here, Master Rudy?」

「Yes. I already made reservations. Even so, the city is prospering isn't it?」

Rudy Eintoss.

A young master who was the heir of a prosperous mercantile house and had just gotten married to his fiancée a few weeks ago.

That was the fake name and setting that were created to help Lux infiltrate Heiburg this time.

The captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca zen Vanfrick gave him the special mission to search for the traitor of the world alliance. Lux came here to investigate a certain transaction.

Because headmaster Relie and Magialca were friends with each other, this fake setting was also prepared by the guidance of those two but—

「But it's better to be careful yeah, young master. At a glance, this is a simple and vigorous city, but behind the scenes it is swarming with fishy bunches. Well, it depends on the place though.」

The coachman who said that while smoking out from his pipe honestly also gave out an atmosphere that was suspicious enough.

The man who was wearing a worn-out tailcoat talked to Lux with a hinting smile.

「If you want to drink delicious alcohol, there is a bar in that street there. If you want woman, there is a brothel with a quality selection at the neighboring—」

「Wait, it's okay to not tell me that you know-!？」

Lux became flustered immediately when he heard the word brothel.

「Oops, that's rude of me, I forgot the lady there. If you have a wife that beautiful, there is no need to buy a woman eeh.」

‘Ha-ha-ha’ The coachman laughed and stopped his coach.

During that time Lux was shaking the shoulders of the girl sleeping beside him to wake her up.

「We arrived Phi-chan. Wake up now.」

「Munya munya. Lu-chan, eating all of my sweets is.....no good.」

Those voluptuous bulges of her breasts that were shaking together with her

shoulders caused Lux's gaze to be attracted there unconsciously.

Lux's childhood friend, Philuffy Aingram's figure was there to accompany him in his infiltration and investigation.

Her faintly pink hair was tied with a single ribbon. She was wearing a dress with the chest part opened.

According to Relie's story, in the setting they became 『a newly wed husband and wife from a prosperous mercantile house』 but—

(Is this setting really necessary.....?)

Lux made a complicated expression while muttering that inside his heart.

In the first place, Lux was opposed to Philuffy accompanying him in a mission this dangerous, but, 『It's fine. Because, I'll protect Lu-chan.』

『Aa, how wonderful Phi! That's the spirit! Just leave the troublesome things for later to me!』

Based on such a really simple conversation, Philuffy's accompaniment was decided.

Philuffy was studying martial arts, in addition she also had the power of an Abyss so she was ideal for protection duty but—Lux was still uneasy.

But in reality, it was also a fact that there was no one else who was suitable for it.

Lisha, Krulcifer, and Celis were famous existences whose names were known even in other countries, while Yoruka, even though she excelled in stealth, she wasn't suited in acting following a fake setting while infiltrating.

In the end, Lux, whose silver hair was dyed black, and Philuffy were appointed to this mission.

『Haha, sorry to make you wait young master. You two really look like newlyweds but, to think that you will also bring merchandise here, as expected of the young master, how shrewd.』

After Lux got out of the coach and unloaded his baggage, a servant of the inn came to welcome him.

The inside of the inn was also refined to look fitting for a high class inn. The building was built properly.

It seemed that Relie reserved a hotel that could be trusted even inside the Heiburg's capital city but—

「As I thought, it became like this.....」

There was only a single double bed inside the room they were showed to.

The make-up of the room was completely for the use of a husband and wife.

(Don't tell me, we are.....going to sleep together?)

Lux entered the room with his heart pounding fast. Philuffy also followed him together.

Until this point they had safely managed to infiltrate until this place that would be their base.

「Phi-chan, are you tired? It seems that after this today there will be a party in the nearby social meeting place though?」

「I'm fine, I'm only just a bit sleepy. Fua」

「At least say that with your eyes open.....」

Lux sighed at his childhood friend's attitude that was still in her own pace even inside enemy territory, while he also felt relieved at the same time.

Even though they were infiltrating into enemy territory for a secret information gathering, they were also burdened with the disguise of doing a honeymoon trip.

Philuffy's warm and snug atmosphere helped him from his nervousness that made him stiff and awkward.

By the way, to make their disguise absolutely sure, they didn't use their Drag-Rides at all throughout the journey from the New Kingdom until Heiburg.

After being sent off by Drag-Knights who had the occupation as carriers, the two of them changed to riding a horse coach to come until here. Because it was a long trip, Philuffy who easily fell asleep, became like this.

「Then, I'll go there alone, so Phi-chan just wait here. I'll also eat at that

meeting place.]

「Eat..... what will come out there?」

Instantly, the girl's eyes snapped open and Lux's image was reflected on her golden colored pupils.

「.....Err, it will be a buffet party with food that uses ingredients from various countries, and it's all you can eat.」

「I'll also go. I have to act properly, as Lu-chan's bodyguard.】

Within her absentminded atmosphere, sparkling anticipation could be peeked. Philuffy clenched her fist.

Lux unconsciously smiled wryly and said.

「Phi-chan. In the middle of the party, that's.....your role will be as my wife, that's why-」

Lux's face was feeling hot even though he was just reminding her of only the setting of their disguise this time.

「Yes. Take care of me, Lu-chan.】

Philuffy responded with a faint smile. Seeing her expression, Lux's heart jumped strongly.

(Calm down me, it's not like Phi-chan is actually my wife for real.....)

Although, as expected he felt conscious of it no matter what.

Although it would be just a disguise, they would actually act like that, so Lux imagined the scene of Philuffy acting as his spouse.

His relationship with Philuffy went past being a good friend, they were a bit like family with each other, but—

「Ei】

「Uwah!？」

The sensation of his cheek suddenly getting touched surprised Lux.

Philuffy's fingertip was pocking on his cheek still with her serious face.

「Lu-chan is, a bit nervous.】

「.....」

「It's no good, if you aren't a bit more like usual, you know?」

Lux stiffened with a speechless smile hearing what Philuffy pointed out.

If he looked back, when they were children there were times when Philuffy asked him to play this kind of make believe.

「Thank you Phi-chan. Then, let's go together.」

「Right.」

Philuffy nodded slightly and slowly presented her hand to him.

Lux took her hand and then they got into the coach waiting outside once more.

The baggage they were carrying was filled with valuable parts and some merchandise.

Attending the party this time would also become the preparatory steps for the infiltration mission.

While they were advancing through the stone paved streets inside the shaking coach again, a strange sight entered their eyes.

Besides the lining up buildings that looked spectacular at a glance, there was a back alley that was interposed by thick stone walls. A desolate slum area was spreading out beyond there.

(The Heiburg Republic.....)

When Lux saw that sight, he recalled the Old Empire in the past.

The mission of Lux and Philuffy this time—discovering the traitor that was lurking within the world alliance.

Lux quietly thought back to the reason why he was ordered by Magialca to carry out this mission.

Part 2

Inside the underground library where countless bookshelves were lined up.

In that hidden room that existed within the Academy's grounds, Lux couldn't believe what he was told.

「What do you mean that there is a traitor within the world alliance?」

Lux asked back with bewilderment to the girl—no, her appearance was young, but she was a woman with a personality of quite many accumulated years.

The captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca zen Vanfrick.

What the female leader of the world's biggest conglomerate told him was actually a simple answer.

The erasure of the traitor was one of the demands that Listelka, the imperial princess of the Lords, mentioned at the world summit.

Her first demand was the annihilation of the hostile organization, Dragon Marauder.

Second, the investigation and discovery of the seventh Ruin, Moon.

Third, the suppression of the traitor that was assumed to be hiding within the alliance.

All of those demands were presented by the lords as issues for the sake of conquering all the Ruins within half a year, but honestly speaking something felt out of place.

「Well, we cannot assert that there is no traitor among us. In the first place if it's something like keeping silent about the information related to Ruins that has to be reported, every country isn't completely innocent of that isn't that right?」

「.....」

Lux too could do nothing but stay quiet at the question that was filled with repulsive jest.

Just like how the Ymir Theocracy stayed quiet about the matter of the Automaton Ney Louches, the New Kingdom also stayed silent about possessing one of the Grand Forces since some time ago.

By the way, the Dark Marketer Hayes who attacked the New Kingdom to destroy the country.

Her existence that possessed the same traits as the ancient Lords—the people of the Holy Arcadia Empire, after that Listelka was also questioned about her.

『Yes, my little sister was awakened a few years earlier than me from our sleep. I'm not sure why she rushed to do such things, but my little sister has redeemed her sins with the loss of her life. Perhaps she was feeling anger and unease—that she has to take back what had been plundered from the Ruins during our sleep. Regarding our inability to stop my little sister's act that was the result of a misunderstanding, I will apologize as the representative of our side.』

She easily reciprocated like that.

If she said that the tragedy occurred because the people of the Old Empire laid their hands and robbed the Ruins that were managed by the Lords, then their side was also unable to press further.

Although, in regards to Hayes, there was also signs that she had already awakened since the time of human experiments in the era of the Old Empire but—there was no proof or anything left about that.

『Of course, the possibility that those fossils mentioned punishing the traitor only as a deterrence to the countries from here on also cannot be discounted. But from the way they talked, I felt that they had a more definite idea about the traitor's existence.』

『That's—?』

When Lux reflexively asked back, Magialca crossed her arms and grinned fearlessly.

「You don't get the idea? It's the existence of the rebels called Dragon Marauder.」

「.....!? Dragon Marauder, is it?」

The warmonger mercenary organization that was employed by influential people who held enmity against the countries that were monopolizing the Ruins.

A group that was similarly plotting to conquer the Ruins should be an opponent that was unrelated to the traitor amidst the world alliance but—

「Don't tell me there is a traitor that is connected to them amidst us?」

When Lux spoke that cautiously, Magialca cast her eyes down and nodded.

「Well, that's how it is. In the first place there are several suspicious points about Dragon Marauder's existence itself.」

Magialca continued the talk while sighing.

「It seems those guys are using Drag-Rides and weapons that were illegally excavated from the Ruins, but the big countries too aren't that stupid. No one can steal from the Ruins that easily. In that case, isn't it normal to think that at first there was a country somewhere that illegally diverted Drag-Rides to them?」

「.....Then, you are saying that there is a traitor in the Heiburg Republic means—」

Lux muttered with a nervous look. Magialca opened her eyes in admiration.

「As expected from my favorite hero. You've got prospect.」

Magialca's finger tried to stroke Lux's chest with a natural movement, but because Lux quietly backed away, her finger cut through the air in vain.

「Cough. The Black Marketer Hayes who raised havoc in the market since some years ago. That woman was doubtlessly involved in the founding of Dragon Marauder.」

「How, can you reach that conclusion?」

「The ledger. Even like this I'm a head of a company. A few years ago, when I did a business of selling Drag-Rides with a high price, for some reason there was a business rival who I couldn't match at all. That was really irritating. Several get rich quick schemes that wouldn't come that often slipped away from me—」

「Eerr, then Hayes sold Drag-Rides that she brought out from the Ruins to Heiburg, and then from there Heiburg diverted them into Dragon Marauder, is that right?」

When Lux cut off Magialca's resentful complain with his question, she immediately nodded.

「The possibility is there. Using the Drag-Ride production facility that is rumored to exist within the Ruin Gigas, that woman conspired with Heiburg's army commander. She raised her fame in less than a few years by doing that and climbed to the top to become a country's strategist. It is quite a possible reason isn't it?」

「.....Say, could it be that captain is holding a grudge about that time?」

When Lux spontaneously asked after hearing Magialca's tone that was overflowing with cynicism,

「That's not true at all. I only thought that there is no way a newcomer who can do business better than me without doing any petty tricks or fraud could exist. Something like feeling vexed because my own plan got crushed is something that never crossed my mind in the slightest.」

「I, is that so..... But, even if Heiburg's military division was really connected with Dragon Marauder—now it's already too late.」

Hayes had vanished, and nowadays Dragon Marauder's prominence was standing out.

Lux thought that there would be no more merit of doing business negotiation with them.

「No.....that negotiation will surely happen before long. Business relationships aren't something that can be cut off that easily until you find the substitute.」

With the increase in the danger level of the Ruins at present, those Dragon Marauders are losing a lot of their forces. They got no other place to depend on other than Heiburg.]

The rampage of Dilwy that happened in the Vanheim Principality.

The failure of Pope Nias's kidnapping plan in the Ymir Theocracy.

And then the rescue operation of the division commander Drakkhen that happened in the New Kingdom just the other day.

It wouldn't be wrong to consider that Dragon Marauder had lost quite a number of soldiers and Drag-Rides from those battles.

Their remaining decent Drag-Knights were less than 200, thus they would want to reinforce their battle force, surely.

「But, Heiburg's military shouldn't have any reason to respond to them right?」

Even if Heiburg was connected to Dragon Marauder, in this situation after the Lord's imperial family had given a warning, they shouldn't be able to make contact carelessly.

When Lux expressed his opinion, the mature girl chuckled and stared at him.

「Then while sudden, here is a question. In case you want to carry out a hidden transaction, what kind of method are you going to use?」

「Hidden, transaction is it.....?」

Even if he was asked that, he had no recollection of doing business discussion in his time of doing chores.

But at the time that was predating it, if it was from the time when Lux was elaborating the plan to destroy the old empire—.

「I would do it behind the scenes of some kind of big event, or else.....」

「Mix it inside that big event itself. Something like that right? And then, soon Heiburg will be holding a fair that is called the Underground Market.」

「Ah.....」

Lux reflexively slipped out his voice seeing Magialca's hinting smile.

「Now you see. Those Lord bunches will go around looking at the various unconquered Ruins while putting the world alliance under surveillance. On the other hand because Heiburg had finished conquering Gigas, the surveillance on them is thin. Don't you think that the next Underground Market is just the ideal chance?」

「Then—」

「Right. If you can just pin down the transaction place, I'll be right behind you then. Go carefully okay, mister hero.」

Magialca's wicked smile looked like she had a hidden motive.

When Lux was going to turn his back on her and leave, she recalled something and said it to him.

「Aa, wait a second my sweetheart. This is a message from Relie about a different matter but, recently do you have something that you want? She will prepare anything you want as the reward of this mission you know?」

—Suddenly she said such thing that was unrelated with the main topic.

Part 3

「Thank you for waiting, Rudy Eintoss-sama, Phianel-sama. This is the banquet venue of our Viablue Company.」

After a while, the coach finally arrived at a western-style mansion that was the venue of the social meeting.

Naturally, Lux and Philuffy's names were fake names.

It seemed that the mansion was originally used as a meeting place, but right now it was decorated magnificently.

The red carpet had a softness where it felt like the tip of one's feet would sink into it, while the chandelier was designed luxuriously.

Extravagant dishes were lining up above the tablecloth, while even the plates and glasses were quality goods.

Furthermore the people walking around inside were also clad with extraordinary atmosphere.

There was an old man with a white beard gazing at the participants with a sharp glint, then a fat middle-aged man who looked good natured was coming with two beautiful women as his company.

Lux thought it was great that he was brought by Relie and Philuffy to learn about the company previously.

If he acted restlessly in this kind of place, he wouldn't be in any state to gather information.

「Oh, this is unusual. You seem to be still young, where do you come from?」

While Lux was thinking about such thing, a lean man wearing a dress suit suddenly talked to him.

For the time being Lux put into practice a line that he had prepared

beforehand.

He told the man that he was a son from a mercantile house in the neighboring country, and that the two of them attended this party while also having their honeymoon at the same time.

「Hou, how hardworking. More importantly, how about it? Are you interested in giving that beautiful wife an ornament as a present—」

Like that the man searched for a chance to open a negotiation, but Lux refused him mildly.

On the other hand, Philuffy was silently continuing to eat the dishes on the table. Till the end she was in her own pace.

「Hohou. You are quite the eater, how about it? After this let's have a drink—」

And so on, the men were incessantly trying to invite her. Looking at that, it appeared that Philuffy's charm was displayed as expected.

Philuffy with her hair in a tied up hairstyle while wearing a dress with chic color gave an impression that was slightly more adult than usual.

Her big breasts that were peeking out from her exposed chest part and her girly looks that still had vague traces of childishness, they tickled the emotions of the men greatly.

Because she was his childhood friend since they were little, usually it was hard for Lux to be conscious of it, but Philuffy was really lovely.

(But, it will be bad if Phi-chan gets tricked, if I don't pay attention somehow—) When Lux was observing Philuffy's actions attentively like that,

「Even so, to come purposefully at this kind of time, are you going to participate in that event too young master?」

Another male merchant talked to Lux with deep interest.

Lux immediately held his breath hearing the merchant say 『that event』 suggestively.

The Underground Market that would be held behind the scenes of Heiburg's

company party.

Lux heard from Magialca and Relie that there, commodities that were almost illegal would be traded.

However, to participate in the Underground Market itself wasn't that hard.

Because ticket sellers who were selling the participation ticket were coming and going a lot at this kind of party.

However, if someone without connections tried to buy a ticket, he heard that they would get ripped off quite a bit.

「Could it be, it's that—? Is it?」

「Luckily for you I still have some left, I got only two tickets coincidentally.」

Lux smiled wryly inside his heart at the seller's attitude showing off how few remaining stock was left.

But, it wasn't like Lux himself was proficient at bargaining in business, so he went right to the point.

「How much will it take for me to obtain it?」

「Let's see, how about this much?」

The man immediately took out ink and feather pen and wrote the sum.

If it was the Lux when he was still in his chores period, the sum would make his eyes jumped out from their sockets, but now he had the war funds he received from Relie.

In the first place this time he came here for intelligence gathering so there was no meaning in being stingy.

When Lux who thought that reached towards his wallet, the man's eyes sparkled.

「Well, don't be so hurried to conclude this. By the way, the money that you brought here, do you have old gold coin among them?」

「Eerr—that's right, why?」

Most of the things that Lux brought here as merchandises were things that

could easily be exchanged into funds.

These old coins were antique gold coins that Relie prepared for him, they were things with high rarity value.

It seemed that things from the latter period of the Raize era had high prices even among those kinds of things.

「Can you show me one of them? If they are the real thing then I'll exchange the tickets with several of the coins.」

「Got it. Please take a look.」

Lux made an immediate decision and put the bag that was filled with the gold coins on the table.

「Then excuse me.....」

The man opened the bag and took out one coin from there—

「Hmm? This isn't a coin from that era's latter period. It seems this is the gold coin from the early days of Raize history.」

「Eh.....?」

Lux asked back in bewilderment.

He found it hard to believe that Relie would make a mistake of putting fakes in what she gave him, but even when he asked a specialist appraiser who was in the venue, it seemed that what the man said was true.

(It didn't like he was doing any trick, could this be Relie-san's mistake?) Lux didn't understand the subtle difference in the antique coins, so he could only make that judgment.

「It seems that you recognize what I'm saying. Then, I think I will be able to part with my tickets in exchange of everything inside this bag—」

「Lu-chan, wait.」

At that time when the transaction was going to be finalized, Philuffy came out from inside the crowd and approached Lux's side with one hand holding a huge meat with bone attached.

「Wait, Phi-chan!? What are you doing?」

「Don't give the bag.....okay? Because Onee-chan said it, those are antique gold coins. ^{chew chew} Mogu mogu」

「Ho, however this carved date and the coloring are without a doubt the early days'—」

The appraiser old man was saying that, but Philuffy brought her face closer and sniffed the smell.

And then, she spoke with her usual expressionless face.

「It's only that gold coin that smells different. I think that perhaps, the other coins were the ones from Onee-chan.」

「Wha-.....!? Ju, just what are you saying.....」

The man smiled bitterly at what Philuffy pointed out, but Lux didn't overlook his agitation.

Philuffy pointed out that there was only one fake, in other words.....

「I'm sorry appraiser-san. Can I ask you to take a look at the rest of the golden coins too?」

「Right. Oh—, certainly this one is genuine.」

Saying that, Lux showed another gold coin to the appraiser. Then the appraiser informed him that it was the real thing.

Now that it had come to this, it was the ticket seller who first came to open negotiation with him who was suspicious.

When Lux turned a suspecting gaze at the man, he started to make excuses in a hurry.

「I see, it seemed that there was just one different gold coin that got mixed up. In that case—」

「Inside your clothes, I smell the same scent like the golden coin before..... though?」

「Ugh.....!？」

The man's expression changed when Philuffy pointed that out. He reflexively tried to turn around, but his hand was quickly caught and twisted.

Right after that, even more antique coins and jewelries of different types were falling out from his sleeves.

「This is—could it be」

When the appraiser checked them, everyone of them was a valuable item, but the price was low or of inferior quality.

In other words this ticket seller looked for a chance to mix in fakes to lower the value and bought it at a lower price.

Most likely he saw Lux's behavior and saw through that Lux was an amateur as a merchant and came to trick him. But Philuffy's nose was outside his calculation.

「This ticket, is real?」

Philuffy lightly twisted the man's arm and asked quietly.

「U, undoubtedly! If I faked the ticket to enter the Underground Market, I'll get killed!」

Lux nodded after hearing the man's urgent voice and looked at Philuffy.

Philuffy let go of the man's hand and quietly held out her hand.

「Ah, yes. The, the ticket is it? Then just as I said I will give it up for five Raize gold coins—」

「I want, tickets for two.」

「Eh.....!?」

「Make it three coins for two people.」

Philuffy told the bewildered man indifferently.

Although the man was reluctant, because there was the case just now, in the end he was overwhelmed by Philuffy.

「I got the tickets, Lu-chan.」

「Ahaha..... thank you.」

Philuffy showed a small smile, where Lux responded with a wry smile.

Previously when he went with Relie to a company for observation, Philuffy

also saw through fake merchandise and she was also firm at the negotiations after that.

(Perhaps Philuffy is really suited for doing business as expected.....)

Her intention was hard to read with her absentminded expressionless face, and with her doing everything at her own pace, it also meant that she wouldn't be carried away by the other party's flow.

And then, there was also the strength of her will that wouldn't yield once she had decided on something.

How should he say it, while he was feeling surprised, at the same time he also felt a bit lonely.

Because they had been childhood friends since the past, but he thought that it would be his role to be reliable like that.

At any rate, with this they had broke through the first wall.

The opening of the Underground Market would be one week later according to the ticket.

Until then they would stay in this capital city Hidehelm and continue to gather intelligence.

「Yes. I also brought the share, for Lu-chan's meal.」

「Ah, yes. Thank you—wait, I cannot eat this much you know-!？」

Lux reflexively yelled when he looked at the amount of food Philuffy had put on the plate.

Grilled chicken with herbs, mash potato, fish sauté, assortment of fruits, and so on. She was carrying a great amount of food.

「Because Onee-chan told me, a wife has to prepare her husband's meal.」

「The essential way of doing it is careless though!？」

「As husband and wife, we have to act natural, Onee-chan said to me.」

「This is conspicuous instead!? In various meanings since some time ago!？」

When Lux tried to return the dishes, he was told by the banquet's cook to

please eat it with a smiling face.

It seemed that he was really pleased by the way Philuffy ate.

「Here Lu-chan. Open your mouth, aahn」

「Why are you acting like always only in that kind of thing!？」

Although, seeing how they had to keep the appearance of being on honeymoon, strangely rejecting her act was also unnatural.

(Somehow, now I'm wondering if it's really okay to infiltrate together with Philuffy.....) In the first place, didn't they pretend to be a couple so that they wouldn't be standing out?

Lux was thinking such question in his head while passing time at the party with Philuffy.

Part 4

「Fuu..... We managed it somehow for the time being, I think?」

At their return home from the western-style mansion that was the banquet venue.

Lux and Philuffy were slowly walking through the town.

Although it wasn't snowing, because it was early winter the night felt cold to the skin, and the wind was penetrating into the body even through the coat.

They didn't go straight back to the inn with the coach in order to learn Heiburg's geography.

And Lux and Philuffy had another reason to do this, a hidden objective.

Even so—it was strange.

Even though this should be the first time Lux and Philuffy visited Heiburg, for some reason a nostalgic air could be felt from the scenery.

He felt that him walking while holding hands with Philuffy also somehow played a part in that nostalgic feeling.

「Somehow, this feels nostalgic. Walking in town like this with Lu-chan.」

「.....You're, right. The last time was at Airi's birthday I think.」

A memory was replayed at the back of Lux's mind at the same time when he whispered that.

It was when he was a child, when he was playing with Philuffy at the imperial capital.

Normally they didn't really go out to the city much, but sometimes they would go out behind their parents' backs.



When they went to buy a stuffed toy for Airi's present, Lux wore a hat low over his eyes so he wouldn't get found out as a prince. They went around to shops together then.

Thinking back now, it was one of his few happy childhood memories.

「Come to think of it, I still haven't thanked you right?」

「.....?」

Lux suddenly remembered and asked. Philuffy tilted her head wordlessly.

「Remember, you helped me chose a present for Airi's birthday. At that time I said that next time I'll also buy a present for Phi-chan.」

「Right, perhaps.」

But, in the end his childhood promise couldn't be accomplished.

Before Philuffy's birthday that year could come, the environment around Lux changed drastically.

He lost his mother in an accident. He was separated from Philuffy because of her family's circumstances, and that was that.

And then since they were reunited in the Academy until now, various things happened.

He recalled that Philuffy's birthday wasn't far away.

In only ten more days, her birthday would come when this mission was over.

「Say, Phi-chan, is there anything you want?」

Those words suddenly spilled out from Lux's mouth

「.....」

Philuffy's eyes turned round for a moment, then her expression returned to her usual absentminded look and she fell silent.

When Lux peered into her face thinking if she hadn't heard him, it seemed she was thinking. She gave him her answer.

「If it's from Lu-chan, then anything is fine.」

「.....I see. Right, got it.」

Lux thought that her answer was really like Philuffy.

She basically loved food like sweets and the like, but it was hard to understand what she wanted other than that.

This girl didn't wish for much and always stayed by his side.

Exactly because it was right now where the world might end in half a year more, he wanted to properly convey his feelings to her through giving her a present.

His feeling of gratitude for giving him the impetus to getting back on his feet—

While he was walking with such thought in mind, Philuffy suddenly closed her distance with him quietly.

「Wai-!? What's the matter Phi-chan!?」

She clung on him closely from the side. Her soft sensation and body warmth were transmitted across the smooth fabric of her dress.

「Because Lu-chan, you look freezing.」

「N, no. I'm fine, it's just this much! Mo, more importantly I'm wearing a coat.」

「Lu-chan, you're cold. Even though, I'm your wife right now.」

「.....-!?」

Philuffy pouted a bit at Lux's bashfulness.

In the end this honeymoon should be nothing more than a camouflage, but when Philuffy mentioned being a 『wife』 once more, his heart skipped a beat whether he wished it or not.

He wondered if he was actually wedded with Philuffy for real, would it be something like this.

At that time when Lux's heart was pounding hard, a presence suddenly appeared behind.

「Oops, the two going lovey dovey over there. It's not safe to stay this late at night you know?」

「Ri-ght ri-ght. Just because you two are on a honeymoon, aren't you two being a bit too carried away? If you two don't be careful on the streets at night—wait, ouch ouch ouch-! Give up, give up-! Heeelllpp-!」

Three people called out from behind.

When one of them tried to grab Lux's shoulder, Philuffy instantly took that hand and twisted it.

「Yes. That was why I said to stop with the joke. Really, what a troubling person.」

「Ahaha.....it's been a while, everyone.」

Lux let his guard down hearing the girls' familiar voice and smiled wryly.

The Triads who he knew well from the New Kingdom's Academy were lined up in front of him.

Sharis, Tillfur, Noct, the three of them were arranged to contact Lux at this mission periodically to transfer information to the New Kingdom.

「It's great that you seem to be in a good health, Lux-kun. You still haven't crossed the line with missy Philuffy right?」

「Just what are you worrying about so suddenly!?」

Lux was immediately flustered by what the leader Sharis pointed out.

「Yes. It looks like I will be able to bring a good report for Airi too. Although Lux-san is really unreliable in woman relationship, so I believe in you.」

「Make it clear whether you are praising or speaking ill of me-!?」

Lux yelled even more after receiving Noct's calm verbal abuse.

「Fuuu..... Because it's kinda unacceptable. Even though the atmosphere in the New Kingdom is tense, and yet it's only Lux-chi who is going to have a fun honeymoon. Isn't there any role that I also can do? Like pretending to be a mistress or something?」

「Look here..... We are pretty much coming here for an extremely secret mission though.」

Lux retorted with a wry smile at the grumbling of Tillfur who was freed from

Philuffy's arm lock.

These three were like always, but thanks to them he also felt like his tension was loosened.

「Now then, we shouldn't talk while standing like this, let's go back to the inn and talk. After all our position today isn't as students. I've picked up some alcohol and snacks too.」

「Err, you are absolutely having fun aren't you?」

Lux muttered with a really complicated expression. Sharis showed a cheerful smile.

After that, they returned to the inn with everyone and had a light break while exchanging information with each other.

「Then—how is it going in the New Kingdom?」

Sharis straightened her back in response to the question that Lux asked with a low voice.

The flippant atmosphere until just now vanished and she showed a quiet expression.

「We are forced into considerable hardships there. Military forces from the Heiburg Republic are already occupying the west territory of the New Kingdom—the port city Triport near Babel. It seems their supply train was already arranged, and they began entering Babel from the other day.」

In the middle of the campus festival—because of the skill exhibition battle that was held under the presence of the Lords, the Heiburg Republic was granted with the rights to conquer Babel inside the New Kingdom's territory for a month.

The port city Triport, where their troops that were formed mainly around Drag-Knights were massing, was enveloped in a grave atmosphere as though the city was suppressed and turned into a garrison.

One of the Four Great Nobles who was entrusted with the western territory, Dist Ralgris was also focusing on security with all his might, but it appeared that the citizens of Triport were spending days without sleep due to the threat of

the Abyss that might arrive at any time.

「What about Lisha-sama and everyone else?」

Lux asked while eating a sandwich with cheese and meat in between.

Philuffy was also silently snacking on a deep-fried bread despite the amount that she had eaten in the party before this.

「The princess and the others are an essential battle force there. She is taking turns with Celis in the port city to take command of the New Kingdom's military there. Though truthfully we also wanted missy Krulcifer and missy Yoruka to all be present there.」

「Weell, if those four are all present at the same time, as expected the other side will be on guard.」

「Yes. Our infiltration here is also being suspected.」

Tillfur and Noct added to Sharis's answer.

If all the users of the Divine Drag-Rides were mostly going out, as expected the other side would be on guard wondering what the two who weren't there were doing.

The new kingdom was receiving backup from the Vanheim Principality and the Ymir Theocracy sometimes, but as expected it seemed guarding Triport was an exhausting task.

After all, they didn't know when the Abyss inside Babel that Heiburg's military failed to defeat would escape and went to the nearby Triport.

It seemed that Celis's sense of responsibility and Lisha's show of courage didn't let them complain, but the chances were that they wouldn't be able to hold out if this situation continued for a month.

It seemed they had Krulcifer and Yoruka to harden the defenses of the Academy.

It was planned for them to alternate with Lisha and Celis in guarding Triport every few days.

Regarding that, there shouldn't be any problem right now but,

「And, what about her?」

Lux nervously touched the topic about the information that he wanted to know the most.

The Seven Dragon Paladin of the Heiburg Republic, Rosa Granhide.

She was a Drag-Knight that possessed the alias of The Steel Witch, and gave an impression like an unsheathed sharp blade.

She had a severe personality with bared hostility, and it was rumored that she murdered five military cadets in mock battles in Heiburg.

Even though she possessed overwhelming strength as a Drag-Knight, because of her severe disposition, she had a shady history where her existence itself was hidden from other countries.

Lux had no time to investigate in detail about her, so he told Airi and the Triad before he left the country that he wanted them to gather information but—

「About that, we didn't find anything even when we investigated her. In the first place we had conflict with Heiburg since the era of the Old Empire and they broke off relations with us, obtaining information about their Drag-Knight is especially hard.」

「Yes. Airi also seemed to be frustrated.」

The result was contrary to his expectations, but it couldn't be helped.

Lux thought that and sighed, but then Sharis proudly puffed up her chest.

「—That was what we were going to say, but we have prepared a souvenir for you at least. Currently, there is no sign that Lady Rosa is going to move away from the New Kingdom. Regarding the soldiers' commanding, it seems that it's being done by a female general who is her aide.」

「I see.」

Even if someone flew using a Drag-Ride at full speed, it would take about a day and a half from Triport to this Hidehelm.

If he knew that Rosa wasn't here, it would be somewhat easier to investigate.

Although the possibility was high that she was connected with this backroom

deal, so he couldn't feel completely relieved.

「Like that we finished with the report, should we stay here tonight too? Lux-chi too, you are uneasy staying with just the two of you here right?」

「No. I judge that we should go back immediately. There is no time for playing.」

「It's unfortunate but it can't be helped. It looks like you have found out about the date of the Underground Market, so we will show up again around that day.」

Noct rejected Tillfur's joke while Sharis concluded the talk.

This time the role of the Triad was as a pipeline to convey information from the New Kingdom to Lux.

In case Heiburg's military conquered Babel and reached until the floor where the Ragnarok existed, Lord Dist said that Lux's cooperation for the defense there would be indispensable.

The Triad were cracking jokes, but they must be quite nervous too.

「Nn..... See you again, everyone.」

「Yeah, missy Philuffy too, just because this is a honeymoon don't cut loose too much.」

The Triad left the inn with those teasing words as a parting gift.

「Fuu.....」

When Lux sighed, he noticed that Philuffy beside him had vanished without him realizing it.

It seemed she was eating sweets without saying anything during the strategy meeting but—

「Lu-chan, you're tired..... You have to, sleep soon.」

「Uwah!？」

Philuffy suddenly embraced him from behind with gentle strength.

The voluptuous body texture that he felt across her nightwear caused Lux's

head to boil up spontaneously .

「Wha-, what are you doing Phi-chan? Wait, are you drunk!?」

He wondered if she drank the alcohol that Sharis and co. brought, but it seemed she was simply sleepy.

She was hugging Lux firmly with drowsy eyes.

The faint scent of perfume that was mixed with the wafting sweet smell of a girl was making Lux's emotions to seethe.

「I, I'm all right! Phi-chan, you go sleep first—」

He somehow refused her invitation and tried to escape but,

「.....I'm Lu-chan's wife, so I have to take care of you, that was what Onee-chan said.」

「No this is just acting I told you!? It's fine to not go this far when there is no one around!」

The moment Lux reflexively yelled, he was pushed down onto the bed.

「-.....!?」

The texture of Philuffy's flushed body.

Lux almost raised his voice reflexively, it was then—

「Zzz.....」

Philuffy's eyes closed completely and a quiet sleeper's breathing slipped out from her mouth.

「.....Haa」

Lux patted down his chest in relieve while pulling off Philuffy's body from him.

It wasn't like he didn't feel slightly reluctant to part from her, but he decided that it was just his imagination.

Before they went to the social meeting place, they had lightly wiped their bodies, so he guessed that it would be fine not to wake her up tonight.

「Even so, as expected we cannot sleep together.....」

The bed was double-sized, but it was troubling that there was only one.

Rather than a matter of space, it was Lux who had no confidence that he would be able to maintain his reasoning.

「Really, just what is Relie-san thinking.....」

He also felt that she wasn't thinking anything.

No, in a sense her aim was terribly easy to understand.

After all, Relie's wish was for Lux to be wedded with Philuffy.

「But, the me right now, has no leeway to think about such thing—」

It was a bit cold because it was early winter, but he had no choice than to sleep on the sofa.

Lux took a piece of blanket and smiled at Philuffy's sleeping face.

「Rest well, Phi-chan.」

He turned off the lamp's light and closed his eyes inside the darkness.

He felt an intense uneasy feeling in this situation where he was infiltrating enemy territory and regarding the dispute around the first Ruin Babel.

He was a bit anxious whether he could fall asleep, but Lux's consciousness was sinking naturally perhaps because of the cold.

Part 5

That night, Lux was watching a dream of the past.

It was a nostalgic past that tended to be a bitter memory.

The scene from seven years ago of the suffering from the Old Empire's tyrannical rule and the discrimination from male chauvinism.

He was banished from the imperial court and lost his mother in an accident.

And then—Lux stood up in order to change the empire, this was his action after that.

He obtained knowledge by searching and reading the books written by his predecessors in the library, at the same time he polished his skills with the Drag-Ride.

It wasn't enough no matter how much time he had.

He focused on his study and training from morning until evening that he even forgot to sleep.

He was able to sharpen his fangs until so far in that short time—and then to even arrive until the point where the empire was dismantled, was largely thanks to Fugil's assistance, but in one part it was also due to the strength of Lux's will.

But—

〔Hahaa, I get it. You're scared right? Of the reality that what you once believed as right and accomplished might be a mistake.〕

The sentence that the Blue Tyrant, Shinglen Shelbrit once told him caused a twinge of pain in Lux's chest.

(.....Wrong. I'm not hesitating anymore. In order to protect the people who I want to protect, I don't feel any doubt.)

He had no problem in becoming a Seven Dragon Paladin in order to save his Air little sister from danger.

He should have sworn to himself that he wouldn't be scared anymore of the failure that destroyed the Old Empire in the past.

(However, why?)

He had to find the proof of the backroom dealing of Rosa Granhide, the King of Vices, who caused the New Kingdom to be in danger, and defeat her.

Even though this act should be the right one, for some reason Lux was feeling contradicted inside himself.

He wouldn't be able to protect everyone without defeating the enemy that put the New Kingdom in danger.

However, even so Lux's wish was...

—

「—!？」

Lux opened his eyes above the sofa due to a disturbing sound.

He couldn't feel light from the other side of the curtain. The air was cold. It was still late at night.

He immediately became alert and got up. His hand reached towards his Sword Device.

(Enemy? No, wrong—the aim isn't us.....)

Lux held his breath and observed the surrounding's situation. As he thought, there was a voice.

Furthermore it was a loud voice of an angry man that could be heard from far away.

It sounded like someone was condemning another person because of a foot getting caught on something or colliding with someone.

Perhaps because it was midnight, the sound was echoing.

Sometimes the weak screams of a girl reached even until this inn's room.

「Nn, munya.....」

Philuffy hadn't noticed the sounds. She was still sleeping, perhaps because she was tired.

Lux quietly exited the room and got down to the first floor. He called out to the inn's owner who was still awake.

「Oh, what's the matter young master? The door will be closed soon. How about you postpone your outing for tomorrow?」

「No, rather than that, just what was that scream—?」

Lux asked with a tense expression, but the inn's owner, a middle aged man only lightly joined his hands together and said 「Aa」.

「Surely that must be annoying, but there is no need to worry. It should stop soon.....」

「That's not it, shouldn't we help? Perhaps there is a girl who is being attacked you know? Shouldn't we call the guards or—」

Lux was irritated by the man's calm while insisting on that.

But, the reply of the inn's owner was unexpected.

「Young master, is this your first time coming to this city?」

「Eh.....?」

The man leaked out a sigh at Lux's bewildered reaction.

「I understand your feeling but please stop. The man who was yelling angrily like that is the guard. Furthermore that man is a noble and a squad leader class. I'm familiar with his voice.」

The man spoke dispassionately while scratching his head with a troubled look.

「Here is the capital so it's excessively awful. If anyone tries to do anything suspicious even for just a little bit, the guards will soon hear about it. If they aren't satisfied with money or body, then it would be prison for the suspect.」

Those words of resignation rapidly cooled down Lux's heated head.

Right after that, he immediately reached an answer.

「In other words, it's that kind of thing? We cannot oppose Heiburg's military officer who is drunk and picking on a girl right now—」

「This isn't a problem about which is right and which is wrong. If we speak out carelessly, it will be us who get crushed. That's all.」

「—I understand. Excuse me.」

Lux acted as though he was backing down sensibly and returned to his room.

He heard that in this Heiburg, the segregation of status was distinct but, so this was what it meant.

The noble military officers and their dependents whose influence were strengthened, the ordinary citizens, and then—the poor people.

Heiburg that got its territory threatened by the Old Arcadia Empire and was exposed to the dangers of a Ragnarok then concentrated on the route of expanding their military might.

The distortion of authority that it brought about stole the position of the leaders that the mass selected and put up the military in an overwhelming predominance.

Without armed might, they would lose strength in every respect whether in war, defense, and Ruin investigation.

The place Heiburg ended up on that route was the tyranny of the soldiers.

It was a system of government by influential people who resembled the Old Empire.

Lux, who once experienced both the front and back of that era, was immediately able to comprehend the situation.

(If I want to accomplish my mission safely, I shouldn't risk danger now in this place. But—)

When he noticed, his hand had reached out towards the merchandise bag.

He took a black cloak with hood attached to hide the face.

He quickly changed into one of the clothing that he brought for disguise among the merchandise.

Furthermore he only carried the Sword Device of his Wyvern and leaped outside from the window.

He leaped on the fence from the second floor, and from there he landed safely on the street.

Different from before, there was no sign of people in the city at midnight.

Amidst the cold wind that felt like it was cutting into the body, Lux started running towards the direction of the voice.

After sprinting for around 200 ml on the stone paving, he discovered a girl who was being harassed by a guard inside a complicated back alley.

「Noo-!? Please let me go-!」

「This annoying brat. That guy is a traitor to the country. Don't think this will be over with only you accompanying us for a night yeah.」

Inside the darkness, the outline of that scene was gradually getting clearer.

The moment the drunk man pulled the girl's arm further, Lux hit his shoulder with his sheathed Sword Device.

「Guouh!？」

「Over here!」

Lux pulled the hand of the girl when the man pitched forward and collapsed and started running.

After getting out of the back alley and running for a while, they finally arrived until in front of the main street.

He didn't hear any footsteps from behind. It seemed they managed to escape safely.

「Haa, haa..... Excuse me—who, are you?」

「Are you injured? Please take care. Then, excuse me.」

It was great and all that he moved to help the girl, but it would be scary later if he stood out more than this.

He tried to leave behind the gasping girl and left before she memorized his

face.

「Ah..... Ple, please wait a second!」

「No, I don't need any tha—」

「I, I'm thankful for the save. But where is this place? We had been running quite far, so I don't understand the path back.」

「Eh.....?」

Lux was spontaneously bewildered when the girl asked him that.

Although it was midnight, there was some amount of moonlight and the lamps in the city remaining.

「Bu, but you are a citizen of the capital right? I have just arrived in this city—!?」

Lux who was about to say that noticed the secret of the girl.

He didn't notice until now because he was absorbed in escaping, but looking closer, the girl kept casting down her eyes quietly.

「Forgive me. Just as you can see, my eyes cannot see. If I have a cane than I can more or less find my own way, but I left it at that place before—」

(Kuh.....!? No good!?)

Lux finally noticed the troublesome situation he was put in.

That soldier he hit was dead drunk, so there was the possibility that he fainted right away after the hit, but he couldn't just return there brazenly while pulling the girl's hand.

And then, although they were currently at the main street, there was no way he could leave this blind girl behind without a cane this late at night.

With how the girl got into trouble with a guard, he also couldn't use the method of handing her to another guard.

Furthermore because Lux rushed out in a hurry, he didn't bring the map of the capital with him.

Lux was someone with a relatively good sense of direction, but it would be

difficult to search for this girl's house in this dark night.

「Do you have any acquaintance who you can trust? Someone who you feel like you can rely on other than this city's guard—」

There Lux tried to search for a method to at least return this girl back safely, but,

「None..... I think.」

The girl made a self-deprecating expression and hung her head down.

「I am a shamed human in this city..... That's why, I can only go at midnight even for a stroll like this—」

「What do you mean.....?」

After asking that, Lux regretted it thinking that he shouldn't inquire excessively.

But, the words that were dragged out from the girl by that casual question induced Lux's fate to an unexpected direction.

「Because in the past, I was a military cadet Drag-Knight. At the very least, if Rosa or Callesia were staying by my side—」

「-.....!？」

The moment Lux heard those two names, agitation and a shudder ran through Lux's back.

The gentle-looking blind girl tilted her head and waited for Lux's response.

(This girl, is a former military cadet of Heiburg.....!? What's more, she has connection with the Seven Dragon Paladin Rosa and her aide Callesia—)

In Lux's mission this time, he wasn't directly involved with those two.

Because his current objective was to infiltrate into Heiburg's Underground Market and search for the proof of their backroom deals with Dragon Marauder.

Therefore he also had a choice to not listen to this girl's story, but Lux felt a strange fate in this encounter.

「Say, do you have any clue about your home address, like the terrain around it or the name of the street?」

「It might take some time but..... I think I can manage somehow. In the past I could see, so if I rely on my memory from that time——」



If that was the case then there was some prospect in sending the girl home.

After all if she was a former military cadet then it was possible that she was familiar with the map.

「Ah, I'm sorry! I'm being a bother am I? Even though you have only just come to this city recently, and you had also saved me just now.」

The girl suddenly returned to her senses and told Lux that in panic. Lux took the hand of the girl.

「No, please let me send you home. Also, it might take a bit of time but, can you allow me to listen to your story?」

「Ye, yes. My name is Stefa Hersmice. I'm a former military cadet, and right now I'm an apprentice nurse.」

「I'm Lu—not. Rudy Eintoss, a traveling merchant. Nice to meet you.」

He told her that and started walking through the quiet city at night.

A blind girl without a cane and a young man who had come to the capital for the first time.

As expected, their pace was slow while they also had to be careful of the guards' eyes.

Lux talked with the girl using the excess time.

「Is that so, you came to this city for a honeymoon—. Certainly, this is a place that is prospering in various things in the business aspect.」

The reason her tone sounded a bit cynical might be because she was aware of the defense industry as a former military cadet.

「Yes. I'm together with my childhood friend Phi,and you see. There will be a lot of parties on New Year's eve too, so it will also double as socializing from here on.」

Of course that was the pretext of his fabricated social position.

「Even though from your voice you sound young, but you are hardworking aren't you? That's admirable.」

「No, it's not that amazing. More importantly, just now you mentioned the

name of Rosa.]

「Do you know about her? She is already the Seven Dragon Paladin of the Heiburg Republic. It will be great if she is in good health but—」

「That's, about her.....Lady Rosa, can I ask how is she being treated in Heiburg?」

「.....」

Hearing Lux's question, the girl slightly looked down and fell quiet.

Even just from that, he could somehow guess the circumstance.

「Ah, you don't need to force yourself to answer if you—」

「I think from the view point of another country, it must look like she is a really bad existence. She is an EX Class Drag-Knight, but she is a haughty and arrogant, dangerous person. I heard such rumor. But.....I cannot believe that.」

「You cannot believe, the rumor about Lady Rosa?」

「Yes. She was born from a noted military family, and her personality was certainly aggressive. However—if I have to say, it felt like it was just her turning her cowardice into hostility. Even when an accident happened in the mock battles against her, she was really upset.」

「Your eyes, it was because of an accident in the practice ground?」

The blind girl who introduced herself as Stefa nodded.

How should he say it, this was unexpected.

Thinking of Rosa's current figure which was so arrogant and haughty like that, he couldn't even imagine the Rosa that this girl talked about.

When he heard even more of her story, Calensia and Stefa were normal citizens from the street, but they had promise with their Drag-Ride aptitudes and became military cadets. There they became close with Rosa.

But, Stefa's eyes got injured and she was expelled from the academy. Since then she didn't really follow about what happened in the military academy.

During that time, the bad rumors about Rosa were starting to flow one after another before she knew it, and now Rosa had become an existence that was

feared by the people of the capital.

At the same time, the controlling power of the military was increasing in momentum from that time, and Heiburg was rapidly becoming a country that was hard to live in.

「Regarding the reason why Lady Rosa changed completely, do you have any idea about it?」

「.....I don't know. But, right after I was expelled, it seemed that several military cadets died from accidents in mock battles though.」

It seemed that around that time, the military's top management died and the organization structure changed, with various other events happening.

Lux was able to imagine that it must be around the time that Hayes's involvement with Heiburg was starting to become active.

He also heard from Stefa that Callesia tried to investigate Hayes regarding the trend at that time.

「My cousin Callesia didn't show any signs of changing but, I haven't met her for a long time. I believed that Callesia would stop Rosa even if she actually did anything bad, and yet—」

「.....」

Lux was listening to her words while recalling the skill exhibition battle that was held in the Campus Festival a month ago.

—

『Calen. You aim at this one who is near dead. Weeell, the punishment for you was decided already, though, by the time you got done in by such a brat twice. What's going to happen if we lose because of your fault—. If it's the clever you, don't you get it already, riight? It won't be just your parents, even your little sis will be turned into slaves you know?』

—

At that time, the relationship between the two had already become one sided.

Rosa was threatening, oppressing, and toying with Callesia.

If Stefa believed in the relationship of the two, then there was no way he could tell her about that.

If he acted carelessly, then even this girl might get harmed by Rosa's whim.

「If I can meet with Callesia, then perhaps I will be able to understand something.....」

Lux was unable to answer the girl's earnest wish.

「Err.....is your house around here? The bread shop and general shop—and the stone statue are nearby.」

「Ah, I mostly understand the area if we are here. Really, thank you very much.」

While they were talking like that, they finally arrived nearby the girl's house.

She had no cane, so just in case Lux sent her off until in front of her house. Then when Lux was going to return to the inn—

「Err, Rudy-san, you are going to stay in this city for a while aren't you?」

Stefa hesitantly talked towards Lux who was turning around.

「That's the plan but, is there something?」

「I'm guessing, that perhaps, you are intending to participate in the Underground Market that will happen soon?」

「.....」

Lux was immediately on his guard when the girl guessed exactly right.

The Underground Market itself was a legal market, but there was also illicit trade that handled illegal merchandise being done under its cover.

Lux disguised his identity to infiltrate there with the objective of catching such trade in the act.

「No, I'm not—」

This girl had an unexpected connection with Rosa and he asked her about her story against his better judgement, but it wouldn't be good to get involved

further than this with this girl.

But, if it was the military that was managing the Underground Market, there was no doubt that this girl also understood the situation.

And then, if he could meet the cousin of this girl, the aide of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Callesia, at that time the puzzle pieces that he had on hand would be connected right away.

He would be able to approach the core of Heiburg that was increasing its strength by its connection with Dragon Marauder.

「Please! If you see Callesia in the Underground Market, please tell her about me! I will do anything to repay you, so please let me meet with her!」

While Lux was hesitating, Stefa spoke her heartfelt wish.

And then Lux too made his conclusion at the end of his hesitation.

Part 6

「Haa, it became something unthinkable.」

More than ten minutes later.

Lux somehow returned to the inn where he was staying.

In the end, Lux accepted Stefa's request.

Although, since Stefa became seriously injured due to an incident, it seemed that Calensia didn't try to meet her anymore.

Stefa wished Lux to find out the cause, and if possible make it so that the two could meet.

That was the wish of the blind girl Stefa.

At the skill exhibition, Calensia Hersmice looked like a serious military officer and she received unfortunate treatment from Rosa.

At the very least, she should be someone that was easier to approach than Rosa.

According to the report from the Triad, it appeared that Rosa wouldn't come back within these few days, so perhaps it would be easier to negotiate with Calensia right now.

In any case, he would need to be very careful but— either way it was already impossible for him today.

「I'm back.」

The front door of the inn was closed, so Lux entered inside from the window that he used to get out.

When he looked at the bed after muttering with a small voice, he didn't see Philuffy's figure there.

(—!? Don't tell me, she was silently kidnapped!?)

Cold sweat was trickling on Lux's head.

He immediately grasped his Sword Device tightly and turned on the lamp alertly, it was at that moment—

「Ei」

- Grap* Someone suddenly hugged him tightly from behind.

He thought that his heart would leap out for a moment there, but he immediately noticed the person's identity.

「Err, Phi.....chan?」

「Where, did you go?」

「That's, are you all right!? While I'm gone—」

「.....」

He tried to turn around, but he couldn't move because of the firm hold.

She was silent like usual, but right now her silence was scary.

「Err, I'll tell you the circumstance but, can you let go of me for now.....」

It was problematic that he couldn't move but, other than that there was also her large breasts that were crushed on his back which caused his face to turn red.

「No, Lu-chan is in the middle of punishment after all.」

「Wai-!? What do you mean punish—」

「Onee-chan taught me. A wife, must not forgive her husband's night amusements.」

「You are mistaken a lot you know!? No, perhaps it's correct in a sense but this time that's not what happened! In the first place it's fine to not keep the act in a place where no one is looking!？」

「I am, angry.」

After releasing Lux for the moment, Philuffy said that with a bland expression

and dreamy tone that didn't seem angry in the slightest.

「Because Lu-chan acted recklessly by yourself again. Because, you left me behind.」

「Ah.....」

Lux hung his head down before the girl's pure eyes and words.

He hesitated to wake her up because of the sudden happening, but this time Philuffy came with Lux here by her own will.

She was accompanying him in this dangerous mission because she was determined to protect Lux.

For him to venture into danger without telling her, it was no wonder she was angry.

「Sorry, Phi-chan..... I wasn't thinking at all.」

「Nn.」

When Lux apologized honestly, Philuffy quietly nodded.

She looked like she had no initiative, but she was actually really obstinate. But when she understood that Lux was apologizing from his heart, she wouldn't be angry for longer than that.

(I'm also saved by this side of Phi-chan huh.)

Somehow it felt nostalgic. Lux was immersing himself in that feeling while taking off his coat and lightly wiped his body.

After confirming that the outfit he wore was all right and his body also wasn't injured or anything, he faced Philuffy once more.

「I will tell you about the details tomorrow. Now this time it's for real, good night, Phi-chan.」

『Yes, Lu-chan.』

She replied back to him smilingly—was how Lux thought she would respond, but Philuffy wordlessly lied down on the bed, then her hand tapped on the space beside her *pon pon*.

「Err, Phi-chan?」

「Sleep over here. If not, Lu-chan is going to sneak out as you please again.」

「Wai-!? A, as expected that is bad you know!? Lo, look, our room is separated already even in the Academy.」

Lux noticed her intention and his face blushed from getting flustered.

It wasn't that he hated to sleep together with Philuffy by any means, but he was taking into account the physiological phenomenon of himself who was a young man of that age, but—

「It's fine, right now we are on a honeymoon so there is no problem. That was what Onee-chan said.」

「That person, why is she still mixing personal situation even in an important mission that is related to the country-!?」

In practice, the other Divine Drag-Ride users had their own position to consider, so only this time it was Philuffy who was suitable for this mission. He understood that.

「Lu-chan. You aren't reflecting, about just now.」

Philuffy turned her face away *puih* while keeping the blanket bared open.

He took back what he had just thought—as expected she was still angry.

From his experience, it was better to not oppose Philuffy further when she was like this.

In the end, Lux lied down beside Philuffy while asking that at the very least she wouldn't cling to close to him.

When the lamp was turned off and he closed his eyes, Philuffy quietly grasped Lux's hand.

The warmth and softness of that hand caused Lux's heart to skip a beat.

「Night, Lu-chan.」

She only whispered that and closed her eyes, then she immediately began to let out a sleeper's breathing.

(Is this her way of telling me to not go off by myself anymore?) Such will was conveyed to him through the girl's hand that was connected to him.

(But—this also feels a bit, relieving perhaps.)

His heart was pounding slightly hard, at the same time his feeling was getting somewhat eased.

Tomorrow, he had to tell Philuffy everything properly.

His acceptance of Stefa's wish and the answer that he chose.

The accumulated fatigue stole the thoughts from Lux's head.

Lux was feeling the end of the first day of the infiltration while feeling concerned of the well-being of Lisha and the others.

Episode 2 – Heiburg’s Darkness

Part 1

The smell of salty sea breeze and the quiet sound of waves were filling inside the room.

「N, nn.....fua」

Lisha was waking up while yawning. There a beautiful scenery was unfolding.

Blue sea and a harbor made from stone entered the eyes from the window of the small and clean bedroom.

The signboard of Triport, a port city in the western territory of the New Kingdom could be seen from there.

Because it was a city of commerce, it wasn’t a city where one could enjoy swimming in the sea, but it was quite interesting in its own way that the sea and ships were nearby.

It was also fun thinking of using Drag-Rides for crossing the sea or diving into it, and there was romance in ships crossing the sea.

For Lisha, whose hobby was to fiddle with Drag-Rides, this too was a scenery that invited her interest considerably, but—

「Something like patrolling is boring. Hearing the lectures of Instructor Raigree in the Academy is still better.」

She changed into her pilot suit even while complaining and put on a robe above it.

She opened the door and exited the government building, then she walked

towards the opposite side of the port.

At the east of the city, there was a base that was surrounded by a stone rampart, the soldiers greeted her while she was heading there.

「Good morning, your highness Princess Lizsharte!」

「Morning. No need to greet so stiffly like that. It just makes me tired.」

Lisha brightly exchanged light talk while advancing deeper into the base briskly.

At present, there were two forces that were present in this place that was a defensive base from the first Ruin—Babel.

The first one was the force of Drag-Knights possessed by Dist Ralgris, the feudal lord of the western territory.

The other one was the main force of Heiburg's military that obtained the investigation rights for the Ruin for a month.

A female general of the blooming age called Gutefelica took command of the army and progressed the conquering of Babel every day.

Inside Babel that was composed of thirteen floors in total, there was no conquer method other than climbing up from the first floor.

Although the Ruin was discovered in quite the early stages of the New Kingdom, the conquering itself stopped until the second floor.

The first floor was abnormally spacious. Because almost all the Drag-Rides had been carried out from the warehouses that existed in dozens of place there, and the appearance rate of the Abyss was also increasing from the second floor onward. The risk of conquering further didn't match the possible gains.

「Good morning Lizsharte. Did you sleep well yesterday?」

When Lisha climbed to the lighthouse where Babel could be observed, a girl with the same outfit as her was standing by on the highest floor.

The daughter of one of the Four Great Nobles and the third year student who was the strongest in the Academy—Celistia Ralgris.

Lisha greeted back while sitting down beside her.

「I've got a good room prepared for me, but the sleeping comfort is the worst. I cannot sleep from feeling uneasy about the Heiburg bunches in this city.」

「I can sympathize. Its not just the fear against the threat of the Abyss, the air is also tense from the uneasiness Heiburg's soldiers are bringing. We won't last for a month like this.」

「In fact, they also cannot spend that much time conquering the Ruin.」

If the prediction from the Lord's imperial princess Listelka was correct, it would be about five more months until the danger of world destruction by Sacred Eclipse.

Considering that there were still five Ruins that hadn't been liberated, they didn't even have the leeway to spend one month per Ruin.

Thus the world alliance leaders proposed that they should split their battle force into two and assault two Ruins simultaneously, but in reality they were indecisive.

The Seven Dragon Paladin of the Ymir Theocracy, Mel still hadn't recovered completely. And above all else, since then Dragon Marauder was completely in hiding.

If they got attacked from the back by Dragon Marauder after they gave it their all in conquering the Ruins—thinking that caused the countries to become unable to make drastic moves.

When also considering the possibility that they wouldn't be able to oppose a Ragnarok's appearance and their country got destroyed, it was natural to consider to first take the wait-and-see approach at another country's attempt.

In a sense it could be called as the natural conclusion when thinking that they would be unable to concentrate their forces in case all five Ragnarok got away simultaneously, but—

「This is troubling. When thinking about dealing with the Abyss that appear from Babel, we cannot leave from this place.」

It was already five days since Heiburg started conquering Babel.

Although at least there was an agreement that their exploration would be from dawn until sunset, there were countless transfer devices set up inside Babel to get outside the Ruin.

It was nice that there were a lot of escape routes, but even the Abyss would get invited by that and escape outside.

Those escaping enemies would fly to Triport, so Lisha and Celis were posted here to defend against those.

「Around ten Abysses came to Triport for the whole day yesterday. If there isn't at least one Divine Drag-Ride user here, the battle line won't hold with just father's force.」

「You're right.」

Lisha nodded and gazed at the townscape from the lighthouse.

Her gaze caught the sight of Rosa Granhide, the supreme commander of Heiburg's force this time.

「It looks like that woman is really here huh. Though I don't know why she is walking around the city like that.」

「It's certainly strange. On the first day she only went to greet the city mayor, then she only looked around the city, leaving the conquering of Babel to her subordinate—」

Even if Heiburg planned to preserve their battle force until the shortest route inside Babel was confirmed, it was suspicious that Rosa's aide, Callesia didn't show up.

Because, in any case if they couldn't arrive until the floor where the Ragnarok was at, sending out powerful Drag-Knights in the early stage would make the conquering progress faster.

「Either way, this time we cannot enter the Ruin. In a few more days, Krulcifer and that ero woman will come to relieve us from the defense role. Until then we can only accomplish our duty.」

「Come to think of it, recently it seems like you have a good relationship with Yoruka. I am still unable to interact well with her, so I'm envious.」

Celis suddenly said such thing.

It was about the former assassin girl who possessed the alias of the Empire's Assassin Blade, a problem child who couldn't blend in into the Academy at all.

Lisha's cheeks blushed and she got flustered when Celis pointed that out.

「Tha, that's not true at all-!? I'm meddling with that woman because she cannot just be left alone, it's not what you think—or rather, what about you yourself!? Even though it was you who got taught to do that absurd thing in the Campus Festival's punishment game!」

This time it was Celis's turn to become red faced from Lisha's objection.

She waved her hands around while making excuses about that time in panic.

「Tha, that was just me getting tricked by her! That's, if I knew that kissing is fine with just touching the lips lightly, such a thing wouldn't—」

「Well fine..... More importantly, I'm also worried about Lux.」

「You're right. The high level Drag-Knights of Heiburg are all coming to conquer Babel, but it's still somewhat worrying that he is infiltrating enemy territory.」

In case there was really a backroom deal happening there, the situation might even develop into battle there.

Even Celis and Lisha knew that the division commanders of Dragon Marauder were powerful enemies from their confrontation against Drakkhen.

「There is that but, that damned headmaster. She tried to make Lux and that airhead girl to get hitched with each other using all kinds of reasons—and of all things, it became a honeymoon!」

Lisha's face reddened with a dissatisfied expression.

This time in order to avoid confusion, all members of Syvalles received an explanation before Lux departed, but it was still fresh in her memory how everyone except Philuffy and Yoruka were bewildered.

「It can't be helped. After all, there is no doubt that she is the one qualified for the mission this time based on the circumstances.」

「But still—」

When Lisha said that stubbornly,

「You promised not to say that. Haa.....even so, I also wanted to accompany him in a role as his guard or subordinate. If it's me who is Syvalles's captain, then there won't be any violation of the norm even if I'm together with Lux.」



「.....」

Lisha was staring suspiciously from the side at Celis's face that looked somewhat sorrowful.

「Hah..... N, no, personally I'm not feeling envious towards Philuffy. Till the end it's only because of my duty as an aide—」

「Honestly I'm still doubtful about your statement just now but, well fine. After all surely it's a good thing that you can reveal your true self like that.」

Thinking back, Celis being a 『man-hater』 and also her personality that was stricter than necessary weren't the real Celis.

With Lux's influence that undid her obstinate feeling, Celis was gradually becoming able to show her true self even to people like Lisha and the others who were close to her like this.

「It's mysterious. Even though we are separated, thanks to him we can be connected like this.」

Seeing Celis's relieved smile, Lisha also nodded in satisfaction.

At that moment, they could hear the bell sound that informed the attack of the Abyss.

The signal of the bell came five times. The sign meant that five Abyss had appeared from Babel and they were heading here.

「Then, how about we test this so called power of unity right away?」

Lisha smiled boastfully and stood up. Celis stood beside her and unsheathed her Sword Device.

Even though they were burdened with the heavy responsibility of defending against large quantity of the Abyss that were just a stone throw away from them, it was as though the willpower inside their eyes wasn't affected at all.

「Come back quickly okay, my knight!」

Lisha wore her Divine Drag-Ride Tiamat while pouring her wish into it.

In this conquering, the number of the Abyss that got outside from Babel just for today reached until thirty.

The long battle that threatened the New Kingdom was starting even today.

Part 2

On the other hand, at Helmhide, the capital of the Heiburg Republic.

Lux and Philuffy who had obtained the tickets to enter the Underground Market were planning to wait quietly until the market was opened a week later.

But, Lux who got involved with a girl called Stefa Hersmice, a former military cadet, accepted the unexpected request from her.

The request was—she wished to meet her older cousin, the girl who was the aide of Heiburg's Seven Dragon Paladin, Callesia Hersmice who she hadn't met for three years.

「Lu-chan. We are leaving soon?」

「Yes. I want to try looking for her before the Underground Market is opened as expected.」

Lux was holding a beautiful hair clip inside his hand.

It was something that Stefa entrusted to him just a few hours ago.

—

After waking up, Lux and Philuffy had breakfast and headed towards Stefa's house first.

It was a plain house that was located in a corner of a residential district for middle class citizens.

She was living alone with her father. Because her father who was a carpenter headed to his workplace early in the morning, there was no one but her in the house when it was before noon.

「I'm sorry to make you wait. Rudy-san and..... his wife Phianel-san is it? I'm grateful that the two of you will listen to my request.」

Of course, Lux didn't make a firm promise about his cooperation with her to

have her meet with Calensia, it would only be something that he did on the side until the Underground Market was opened. Even so, the girl said her thanks happily.

「And, about the story's continuation—do you have any idea about Calensia-san's tendencies?」

To reunite her with her cousin whom she hadn't met for three years, they had to have some knowledge about her location before they could do anything.

Then Stefa frowned uneasily, and her voice's tone lowered by a notch.

「Err, while the two of you are coming here, you weren't seen by the guards right?」

Lux guessed what was on her mind from her vigilant state.

It was likely that she was going to talk about a matter that was related to a military secret.

「We were careful just to be on the safe side but, please don't force yourself. Right now we cannot guarantee your safety.」

Even Lux couldn't carry that much responsibility.

Thus he said that trying to stop her, but the girl before him shook her head.

「No, please let me say it. I cannot just make a wish while staying alone by myself in safety—」

After hesitating slightly, Stefa opened her mouth determinedly.

「Even though I was just a military cadet Drag-Knight, at that time I was placed in a special class. On that occasion, I was entrusted with being a guard in the Underground Market several times as preparations for the future. Calensia was certainly with me at that time.」

Stefa finally began to talk about the military's secret information.

There were a lot of illegal things circulated within the Underground Market.

Rare Drag-Ride parts and weapons, they were sold and purchased with a lot of tax applied to them.

In other words, the military wasn't just guarding the Underground Market,

there was no doubt that they were taking part actively in it.

「If Callesia is still doing the same duty, there are several places that she will stop by. If you can meet her, I want you to tell her the circumstances and show her this.」

Stefa said that and took off the hair clip that she was wearing, which she presented towards Lux.

It was a beautiful accessory with blue gems scattered on it.

「This is, a present from her to me for my birthday. Please. Will you ask Callesia for me? About what is going on in this country, and what happened to Rosa?」

「I understand. I will do as much as I can.」

Lux told Stefa that and parted from her. Then he started to move together with Philuffy.

And then now—Lux and Philuffy marched towards a pleasure quarter that was at the outskirts of the city with precious metals for business discussion at hand.

There wasn't only bars there, but also places like brothels, gambling dens, every kind of place that was smeared heavily with desires—in a glance it was a suspicious area that looked lawless.

「There was also this kind of place in the Old Empire though.」

In reality this was the first time Lux went to this kind of place. He felt a bit bewildered.

「As I thought, wouldn't it be better if I investigated this place alo—?」

「I'm, Lu-chan's bodyguard, you know?」

Lux unconsciously muttered that because he was uneasy to drag Philuffy along here, but after she told him that he could only respect her choice.

Because, thanks to the body strengthening from the Abyss's influence and the martial arts that Magialca taught her, she possessed combat potential that could easily defeat a large man. In this situation it would be something

indispensable.

However, the innocent look and the air of wealth the two of them had appeared to mark them as tasty prey for the lot here. They didn't know how many times they were called out to before they could arrive at their destination.

Like that, they arrived at the bar that was their target.

When they entered inside the bar that looked really dubious with pink colored lighting illuminating the place, the female bar owner suddenly approached them.

「My, boy. Is this your first time on this street? If you are with your woman then go back home quickly. You must not make your cute wife cry.」

The black haired woman with beautiful light makeup suddenly scolded Lux.

「No, that's not it— you are the guide correct?」

Lux presented to her a letter.

Then the woman's eyes blinked and she quickly followed the written letters with her gaze.

「We are looking for Callesia-san, have you happened to see her around here?」

「.....Come inside for a bit, it would be bad to stand here.」

The female owner pulled Lux's hand and led Lux and Philuffy inside the bar's parlor.

A questionable alcohol was brought out for the drink, but he couldn't get himself to reach his hand to it.

This female bar owner seemed to be a friend of Stefa's deceased mother.

Perhaps because of that, she knew well about Stefa who had come to this area as a military cadet.

「I see, you became acquainted with Stefa and she asked you to inquire about Callesia—but, just stop it you two. I don't know what your relationship with that girl is, but it's too dangerous for you to do this because of good will. By this

time, it's already too risky to even say their names out loudly. Not just Rosa's name, even Callesia's name is the same.]

「What, do you mean?」

The woman sighed deeply at Lux's question that he asked with a doubtful expression.

「I cannot say it out loud, but it's true that the goods of the military and Ruin that will be sold at the Underground Market were safeguarded in the warehouse nearby. However that was only until a short while ago. Right now, Heiburg's military has become even more dreadful.」

「Is it because of the existence of the Dark Marketer Hayes and the King of Vices?」

The public order of Heiburg had worsened far more than before and the controlling power of the military was strengthened to a large degree.

Those who were defiant and spoke out were executed, and every place was placed under the control of the military.

The treatment for prisoners from other countries that were captured and couldn't be brought to the open and kidnapped citizens was also like that.

It seemed the women were made to work as prostitutes, and the men were treated like slaves to work in physical labor.

The country was taking initiative in working evil deeds, where the inconvenient things were camouflaged from other countries as the work of the rowdy people here.

At present, this was that kind of place.

「Such, thing—」

‘Is impossible’—Lux was about to say that, but he couldn't deny it.

Five years ago, what the Arcadia Empire did was nearly the same as here.

Lux himself who was trying to change the empire had witnessed such things whether he liked it or not.

「That's why, our guys here are also really fearful. —After all military people

are in the experiment site deeper in this place. Right now is especially not good. Those guys, they are even starting something terrifying.]

「Experiment..... is it?」

「Yeah.」

The woman nodded with a voice that sounded like she was repressing something.

「Furthermore, these few days, that Callesia who you are looking for is also coming and going there. I don't know the reason. Surely she was ordered by Rosa but, either way—there is no way what she is told to do is something decent.」

By the way, the female bar owner wasn't acquainted with Callesia until a few years ago. After that, she noticed that Callesia was Stefa's relative and talked to her a few times, but it seemed that Callesia herself told the woman to not tell Stefa about herself.

‘Fuu’, the woman let out a long sigh and gulped the alcohol.

「Now you understand? Whether you two are somewhat bad merchants or good people who listened to Stefa's request—you must not get involved with the darkness of this Heiburg. If you get it then go home, while you two are still safe.」

That seemed to be the conclusion of this woman who was living in this dangerous place.

Certainly, it might be just as she said.

If Lux was just a mere young traveling merchant, there was no way he should poke his nose in this kind of dangerous matter.

He had already obtained the ticket for the Underground Market, so perhaps it would be more sound to bet for a chance there.

But, even after understanding that, Lux was still harboring a frustrated feeling.

Because in that skill exhibition battle, Callesia might have suffered some kind of irrationality due to being blamed of her failure where she got outsmarted by

Lux.

「Then, please allow us to wait for Calensia-san here for a while. Please notify us if she is passing nearby.」

「Are you sane? Even if by some chance you can meet Calensia, it's not something that you will be able to do anything about.」

「Perhaps that is so. But, I should be able to convey Stefa's feelings to her. I should be able to fulfill the promise by doing that. That's why—」

That was half truth and half lie.

The lie was at the part where Lux was a young master of a mercantile house who came here on a honeymoon.

If it was with Lux and Philuffy's skills, there was a way to help Calensia here.

Lux made that request with such thinking but—

「It's troubling. I cannot take any responsibility you know?」

When the troubled looking woman stared at Philuffy who was staying quiet with a dreamy expression, 「No problem. I'll leave it, to Lu-chan.」

「Is it fine?」

「It's fine. I'm, strong.」

「.....」

Perhaps the woman folded before Philuffy's strong will, she responded to the persuasion even while feeling exasperated.

「I get it. I'll tell you two if I find Calensia, so you can stay inside this bar until then. If you two are walking around this area looking like that, it will be really conspicuous.」

Certainly, Lux was also aware of that.

If they couldn't meet with Calensia here, it would be troublesome if Lux's identity was exposed in the worst chance.

And so, Lux and Philuffy judged that they should hide themselves in this bar for a while.

But—the moment they sighed in relief, they received an unexpected suggestion from the female bar owner.

「Then, I'll have you two work for a bit. This room is also used for work after all, surely you two will feel bad to stay here for free.」

「Wai-, please wait a second!? Both of us are—」

「It's fine, it's fine, I won't let you two accompany strange guest so don't worry.」

It was now the turn of Lux who should have determined himself to get flustered.

And then, a few minutes later—

Inside the bar that was illuminated by suspicious light, Lux and Philuffy each changed clothes and worked awkwardly.

Philuffy was wearing clothes with white and black as the base colors. She was receiving and welcoming customers silently.

It was a simple outfit with the area around her shoulders abruptly exposed, but coupled with her natural appearance and the impressive presence of her breasts, she was emitting a charm that would entrance anyone if they were a man.

If the little sister lover Relie saw her now, she would be happy, but in this place Lux was worried.

(This can't be helped in order to secure that person's cooperation, but if something happens, I have to protect Phi-chan—) Lux was fretting inside his heart, even so Philuffy herself wasn't perturbed.

Her appearance wearing a hair band that resembled rabbit ears caused the male customers to continuously call out to her to accompany them drinking, but Philuffy indifferently avoided the advances of the drunkards.

She expressionlessly warded off *pechi* the hands reaching out to touch her and also smoothly ignored the obscene words.

「That girl, perhaps she unexpectedly has talent. Though it's a bit of a problem how she is staring at the customer's food cravingly like that—」

And so on, the female bar owner was also giving Philuffy high praise.

On the other hand, Lux who had changed into a waiter appearance was also receiving a lot of designation from the female customers and he was greatly busy.

「But, you are also doing fine. You look pretty used to this. It's to the degree that I cannot imagine you as a young master of a mercantile house you know? Won't you consider living here?」

「A,ahaha.....」

It was the result of his experience living the life of chores for five years, but honestly it didn't really make him happy knowing that.

(What's this, it feels like this kind of work is the same no matter where you are.) Lux smiled wryly while putting in order the work before him. Like that time passed quickly.

「—Thanks for your hard work, it's fine if you two rest for a while.」

Two hours later. They took a break in the parlor by the bar owner's consideration.

They started this work to fill the time while waiting for Callesia, but the two of them got used to it more than expected.

「Next, it will be great if we can luckily meet with Callesia-san though—」

After Lux, who was leaning tiredly on the sofa muttered that, Philuffy who was also sitting beside him turned her gaze to him.

「If Lu-chan could meet her, what are you planning to do?」

「I want to at least hear the story from her. Also, if possible—I want to help her too. Of course, I have to prioritize the New Kingdom, so it will depend on the situation.」

「I see.」

Philuffy didn't agree or disagree with him.

She gulped down the water-like thing the bar owner prepared for them and then looked around inside the room.

「But, this place, it's similar somehow isn't it?」

「I, guess.」

Lux guessed what Philuffy meant by her question and nodded.

A stifling atmosphere that resembled the Old Empire in the past was ruling over the very city itself.

If, five years ago Lux didn't plan the coup d'etat, would he and Philuffy be able to live normally?

And then—

「Hey, Phi-chan. About what I did.」

Lux also took a glass into his hand while he suddenly thought.

If he wasn't betrayed by Fugil on that day of revolution, would the imperial family and the military officers of the Old Empire have survived?

Or perhaps, it would be just as Fugil pointed out, Lux would be betrayed by the imperial family and then killed, and everything would be treated as something that never happened?

He couldn't deny that him trying to save the enemy too as much as possible was a naïve ideal.

But, Lux was cast away when he was a child in the era of the Arcadia Empire.

When he was banished from the imperial court and the coach his mother was riding on met an accident, the oppressed people condemned Lux.

Actually, his fate was the result of his grandfather trying to save the people, but they directed the brunt of their anger to him just because he was an imperial family member, and he couldn't resist them.

He had no authority at all as the youngest brother of the imperial family and couldn't make any move.

He thought that it couldn't be helped even if he was condemned about that matter.

Even so, as much as possible, Lux didn't want to consider anyone as evil and judge them as guilty just because they were on the enemy's side.

「Buhah!? Wait, isn't this alcohol!? Just what is that person giving us!?」

When he drank the content of the glass while getting absorbed into a deep feeling, the inside of his throat flared hotly.

He was surprised for a moment, but thinking back carefully, right now Lux and Philuffy were disguising themselves as adults.

He became uneasy and looked at his side. There he saw Philuffy's face that already looked drowsy and intoxicated.

Her cheeks were slightly tinged with redness, and her breathing was getting somewhat rough.

Somehow, when he saw such Philuffy when it was only the two of them alone inside a room, coupled with the exposure rate of her outfit, it caused Lux's heart to beat fast.

「It's, all right.」

「Eh.....?」

For a moment, Lux thought she meant that she wasn't drunk, but she took Lux's hand for some reason and she pulled him towards her chest.

Lux's face became heated from getting embraced by Philuffy from the front.

「Wai-!? Phi-chan! What are you doing!?」

「Because, I'll be together with Lu-chan forever.」

「That's the setting of our disguise, right now we came to this bar for—」

She was completely drunk.

(This is bad! At this rate, this will be a hindrance for the mission right now.) Thinking that, he tried to separate from Philuffy somehow, but he couldn't resist the soft elasticity and sweet scent that displayed their definite presence.

It was bad that Lux had also drank the alcohol just now.

If it stayed like this, Lux's rationality would be melted away.

「Lu-chan, isn't mistaken. I was happy, to be saved.」

When he was thinking that, she gently whispered into his ear.

The voice that was warm like a sunny spot shook Lux's heart slightly.

「Munya munya. Zzz.....」

「Wait, please don't sleep while still hugging me!? The bar owner will return soon—」

Lux who returned to his senses squirmed within Philuffy's embrace in panic, it was at that timing.

「——」

- Gashan!* The sound of glass breaking could be heard and a tense atmosphere flowed in.

Lux immediately separated from Philuffy and peeked at the state inside the bar from within the parlor.

「There are only discourteous bunches here as usual. I told you to remember my face right? After all, I was promoted into Six Punishers Servants who work directly for Rosa-sama, you get iitt.」

It was a man with unkempt and bristled up black hair, sitting down heavily on the sofa.

He was thin with only skin and bones, with purple shade formed under his eyes, even so his eyes had an abnormally fierce glint.

「You two, keep hiding like that. A troublesome guy has come. He is one of the Servants, the unit that is directly under Rosa's control. His name is the 『Cutting Punishment』 Brandish.」

「.....-!?」

The bar owner visited them once and said that, which caused Lux to hold his breath.

According to the information from the Triad, Rosa and the Servants should still be occupied by Babel's conquering, but could it be that one of them stayed behind to manage the Underground Market?

The emaciated man who was called Brandish emptied his glass in one gulp and glared intensely at the bar's staff.

His disdaining gaze was appraising everyone while looking down on them at the same time.

His expression, rather than looking unpleasant, it was more like his own conceit was surfacing on his face.

「And, which one is it? The rumored cute newcomer. I heard it while walking on the street just now yeah? Bring her out.」

Tension ran through the bar with the man's sentence.

It appeared that anyone who caught the eyes of this man wouldn't meet with a decent fate.

「You have sharp ears. But, if it's that girl she already went home for today. She is only helping out here specially for today. That's why—muguh!？」

The moment the bar owner acted to soothe down the man, Brandish's hand reached out and grasped her throat.

「Don't make a mistake madam. I'll get her out immediately—that's what you should say right? Don't you dare to look down on Rosa-sama. Especially at this time, anyone who is probing at the warehouse ahead from here, they must be assassins from another country or those Resistance bunches.」

The actions of Lux and Philuffy were seen through.

This man was obviously coming here to investigate the two of them.

Most likely there were also several spies who were mixed up with the people in this area.

It wasn't something unexpected, but this turned out to be something bad before they could participate in the crucial Underground Market.

「Munya..... Lu-chan.」

As expected Philuffy felt the omen of danger this time, she woke up while still drunk.

「Wait Phi-chan. You mustn't come outside! If that guy and his subordinates remember our faces, it will be bad.」

But, Lux held her back with his hand and waited for a chance calmly.

Perhaps they could manage somehow if they fought while hiding their faces, or perhaps if he only used his Wyvern that was difficult to be investigated.

The enemy was one of the Servants, but if he took him by surprise, then somehow—

「Can't you be a bit calmer? Using this kind of method won't do anything good for Heiburg Republic.....」

Then, while Lux was thinking so, a voice came from beside the man.

「—!？」

From the gap of the door, he could see a girl with a young appearance whose body was wrapped in military uniform.

Her hairstyle that exposed her forehead and intellectual glasses left an impression. She was an aide of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Callesia.

It appeared that this situation was unexpected for her. She ran her gaze through the bar with a somewhat long face.

Lux had never imagined that he would find her here along with the enemy.

This was a predicament where Lux and Philuffy's true identity might get found out by the enemy before the Underground Market opened.

But, at the same time it was also the chance of a life's time.

「Aaa!? You think you can say anything to me when your position is just as Rosa-sama's lowly servant-! Should I take away this bar's people as traitors?」

But, Brandish was enraged by Callesia's warning and thrust away her shoulder.

The moment everyone's attention was diverted by that, Lux kicked on the floor and rushed out quickly.

Victory went to the one who made the first move. He didn't summon his Drag-Ride and slashed directly with his unsheathed Sword Device.

Other than Callesia, there was only one other man who seemed to be from the military who followed Brandish.

If he could just take Brandish who was the leader as hostage, that would be

the end.

Lux predicted that and went to suppress the emaciated man, but—

「.....Fuhaa!」

When he almost reached, the man with the alias of Cutting Punishment reacted and pushed the man beside him towards Lux.

「.....-!？」

Lux immediately pulled back his sword, collided with the man that was pushed on him and he fell on his back.

(This is bad, at this rate—!)

At that instant when Lux was at a lost about how he should move, Brandish pulled out his Sword Device, twirled his wrist, and thrust the tip below.

(Don't tell me—!?)

Feeling of disbelief crossed Lux's mind and he twisted his body.

Right after that, the Sword Device's blade was stabbed toward Lux along with Brandish's follower lying on top of him.

Lux barely dodged, but the blade stabbed through the subordinate's torso and went further through the wooden floor.

「UGYAAAAH!」

The subordinate's shriek resounded and the bar's staff and customers gulped.

The man who was the direct subordinate of Rosa casually stabbed his own subordinate to death.

「This is why a former prisoner is useless as an underling, he cannot even hold down the enemy. Calensia! You deal with this guy. I'll search for the other hiding woman this guy brought! Get it!?」

While Lux was fixing his posture, Brandish smoothly pulled out his Sword Device that stabbed his subordinate.

Like that he then ran toward the parlor where Philuffy was at.

「Wait-！」

「Got you—」

Right after Lux reflexively tried to chase after the man, the emaciated man swiftly turned around and slashed.

Lux barely blocked it with his Sword Device, but the skin of his chest was cut and blood oozed out.

「Aren't you quite calm? Even though I thought you got caught by the lie. Kehahahaha!」

Lux's expression tensed by Brandish's provocation.

There was no way he could let a dangerous man like this go free.

He was in a disadvantageous situation, but he had to defeat him no matter what.

「You want to cross swords with this me, interesting! Calen! You help out too!」

He gave instruction to Calensia who was flustered beside him, but the girl shook her head.

「Stop with the joke. You think that it won't become a problem when you are rampaging like this?」

「You are the one who knows best that it won't be any problem right? Someone like you whose whole family is taken hostage by Rosa-sama huuh?」

「Kuh!」

Calensia's groan made Lux guess her situation.

As he thought, she was only being used.

The one he should defeat in this place was only Brandish alone.

But, contrary to Lux's expectation, Calensia quickly leaped out in front of Lux.

She let out her Sword Device from its sheath as though to say that she would be his opponent now.

「If I let you fight, you will kill the two of them. Don't interfere.」

「Hoou. Nice dedication you got there. Then, I'll be so kind to concede the

achievement to the aide-sama here.]

Brandish made a thin smile and unexpectedly he went outside obediently.

Calensia who confronted Lux one-on-one slowly lowered down her Sword Device, showing her intention to call off the fight.

「You, what are—!?’]

When Lux asked, Calensia lowered her tone by two notches and whispered.

「For now it's that kind of thing. I don't know who you are, but leave this place quickly. I'll somehow let the other girl who seems to be here too to also escape, that's why.....」

「Aren't you obeying Lady Rosa?」

「Ple, please don't say anything unnecessary! More importantly, if you don't hurry and escape from here.....」

「—Aah, that's right, it's too late already yeah.」

- Gachiin!* The unique sound of metal clashing came from outside.

The sound that signed of Drag-Ride moving—preparing to fire its Cannon let Lux who was inside the bar to instantly guess what was going on.

Calensia also came to a realization in surprise and quickly got down on the floor.

「Everyone get down! A bombing is coming-!」

Right after Lux yelled in warning, an impact that whipped out his five senses pierced the bar.

He was struck by the thunderous roar that made his eardrums feel like they were going to burst. Shockwaves exploded and covered everyone's screams.

Inside the flow of time where his consciousness was getting farther, Lux was worried about Philuffy's safety.

(—He is insane! To blow away the whole bar like that!)

That man was easily backing down not because he was listening to Calensia.

He backed away to make Calensia as bait while he bombed the whole bar.

Lux knew that the military of the Heiburg Republic was rotten, but this far surpassed his imagination.

The military's Drag-Knights who possessed absolute authority carried out inhuman acts mercilessly to make examples.

This man intentionally accomplished evil deeds in order to display violence and terror.

「Kukukukukuku, I held back so you are alive right? Though it will be more painful to stay alive. I'll let your body taste a lot of the price for covering up for outsiders—gugah!？」

At that moment when the man was grinning thinly while feeling elated of his success, a Blade that thrust out from beside a wreckage pierced the armor of the EX Wyrm he was wearing.

It didn't result in considerable damage, but Brandish leaped back and glared at Lux in surprise.

「What the hell are you bastard..... Since when did you summon your Drag-Ride?」

「I don't need to answer you!」

The fact was, it wasn't anything special.

After all, it wasn't like Lux was hiding while summoning his Drag-Ride.

It was the Drag-Ride summoning without chanting as well as high-speed connection that were Celis's forte.

Thanks to him accompanying her in her training, it was useful to escape this predicament.

He could only believe that Philuffy had heard his voice and she had gotten down.

Either way, there was no other option for him than defeating this man now.

「You think you can win? The likes of you who is merely using a general purpose Drag-Rideee!」

Brandish lowered his Cannon, in exchange he lifted up a long great sword.

It had a strange shape with minuscule blades attached along the edges like a saw. Most likely it was a type of rare armament.

Originally, Lux should be vigilant and observe the situation. But,

(I cannot spend much time. I'll decide this with one attack!)

Lux gathered strength by exhaling, then he skated in a straight line using his Wyvern.

If he had the Scale Blade that was made by Lisha, he could destroy the opponent's weapon.

In order to make Critical Hit, that was a type of counterattack, a success, it was necessary for him to see through the preliminary motion of the opponent's attack, Brandish's sudden slash was simple and met Lux's attack.

「You think you can block this—you idiot!」

Brandish grinned widely. In that moment, Lux's Blade that was covered with barrier was repelled hard to the back.

「Wha-!？」

Looking closer—the rare weapon the enemy held was tinged with intensely undulating light.

The minuscule blades running along the edge in high speed.

Lux's Blade was repelled by that powerful movement energy and his Critical Hit's timing was disturbed.

「Hyahahaa! You are lucky that my —《Vibration Blade Chain Saw》 didn't break your weapon. But this is the end! I'll hack you into pieces you damn braattt!」

With the returning slash, he attacked once more at Lux whose balance was broken.

—But, even with his balance crumbling from getting his attack repelled, Lux moved for the counterattack.

「Howling Roar!」

The energy that was concentrated on the armor's head was unleashed in spiral shape from one point.

At the same time, Lux readied his own blade before his eyes. The blade struck while being pushed from behind by the shockwave.

「Gu, ooh.....!？」

Simultaneously, the enemy's Chain Saw also cut apart the Wyvern's barrier and smashed the shoulder armor.

Despite the attack's might had been decreased considerably, its terrific power was transmitted until Lux's body and sharp pain spread through his whole body.

「U, AAAH!?」

An impact where his tendons, his bones, his muscles, and even his blood were carved ran through his body.

After Lux was sent flying back, his Wyvern's armor was dispelled.

(.....I underestimated him! To think this weapon is this powerful!)

The Blade that was specialized for cutting by vibrating its blade in super high speed, the Chain Saw.

It appeared the alias Cutting Punishment the enemy had wasn't just a decoration.

Most likely if he mistook his timing slightly, Lux would be bisected into two.

「U, gu.....!」

His lung hemorrhaged. The pain of being struck down from high altitude and his whole body hitting the ground caused numbness that made him unable to get up.

(Stand! At this rate it won't be just me, even Phi-chan and everyone else would—!) Lux gritted his teeth and tried to wring out his remaining strength, but his body wouldn't listen to what he said.

- Garari* The sound of the rubbles of the destroyed bar being moved out of the way could be heard.

The moment Lux was gasping in despair— Philuffy was standing in front of him.

「You okay, Lu-chan?」

「Phi, chan.....」

It seemed she dodged the Cannon's bombing properly. His childhood friend didn't look injured.

On the contrary she gently helped Lux stood up and she patted Lux's body all over.

Just from that intense pain ran through Lux's body.

「Your bones aren't broken, your internal organs are also safe. But, looks like your muscle is injured, that's why, don't move.」

「Ra, ther than that, the, enemy.....!? What about Brandish!?」

Lux tried to drag his unmoving body to stand up, but Philuffy's hand gently stopped him.

「It's fine. It seems, he already fainted.」

Just as Philuffy said, Lux could barely see the figure of a man with his armor dispelled falling prostrated on the ground.

「I see, that's good.....」

‘Fuu’, Lux sighed and relaxed his body.

He won by a hair's breadth.

Thinking that he couldn't allow for more victims to appear, he moved to decide the battle quickly while still not knowing the enemy's scope of power. It was a blunder that was unlike Lux.

If the opponent also didn't underestimate Lux because he didn't know his true identity, it was unknown how the battle would end.

「I'll carry you, to a doctor's place.」

Philuffy lightly carried up Lux and when she was going to walk away like that—

「Please wait! You two, just who in the world are you!?」

The voice of Calensia who was laying down inside the rubble stopped the two of them.

「I'm grateful that you stopped Brandish's rampage. But, there is no way I can allow the two of you to escape like—.....-!？」

Here, it appeared that she recalled Lux's face. Her eyes could be seen snapping wide open behind her glasses.

「You are.....no, you two, could it be—」

Lux immediately took out Stefa's hair clip from his breast pocket and held it out. The girl stared at that in bewilderment.

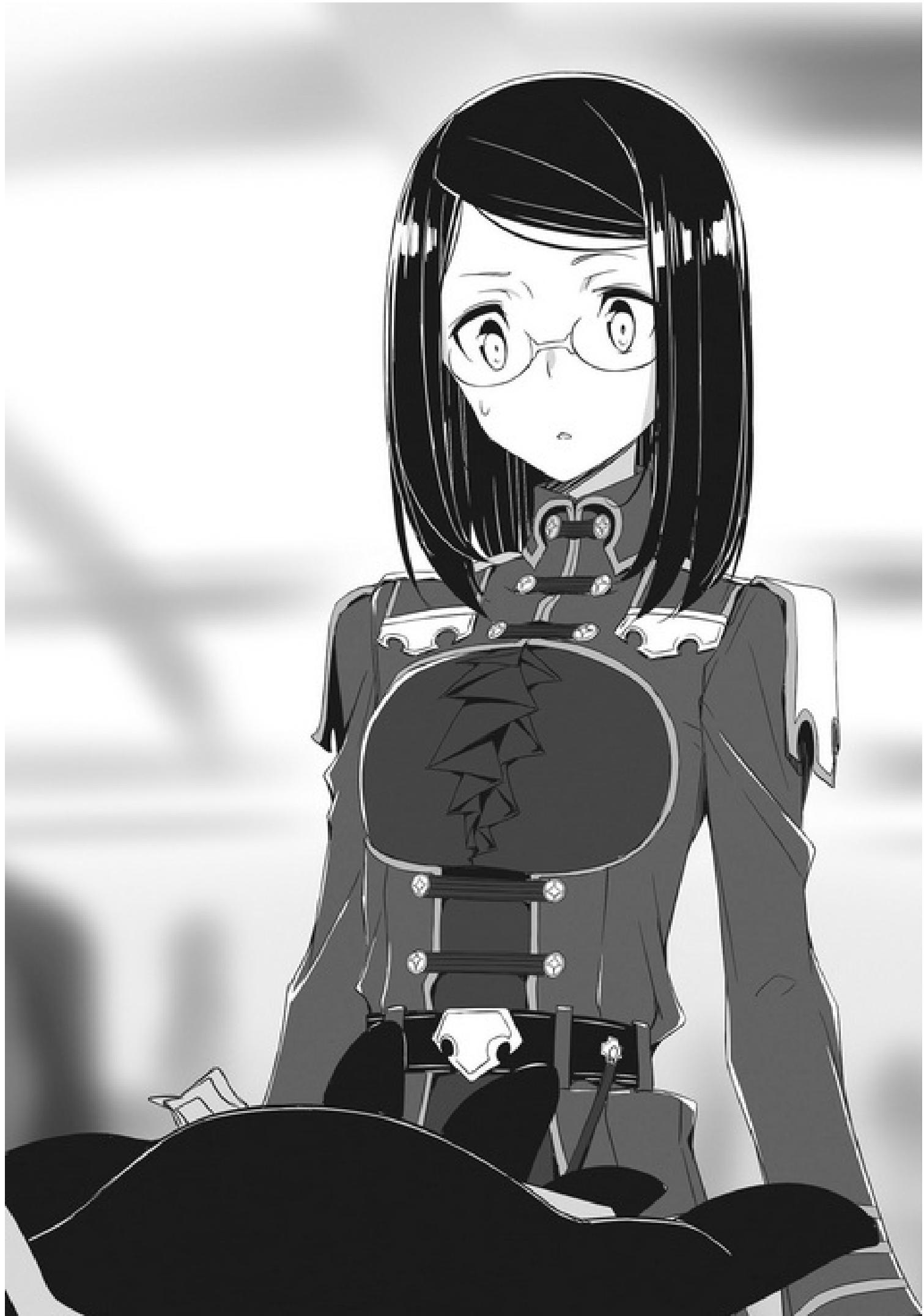
In order to remind the girl who stiffened as though she couldn't immediately recall the hair clip, Lux told her the meaning of it.

「Do you remember this hair clip? It's something entrusted to me from your cousin, Stefa.」

「Stefa.....was? That girl, why.....」

After whispering in a daze, Calensia tightened her expression in resolve.

「I understand. I'll listen to what you have to say. I'll deal with what happened here secretly, so can you tell me the place where we can meet?」



Lux nodded, then he designated a certain tea house in Heiburg that he remembered from the other day and they arranged the time when they would meet.

In order to convey Stefa's feelings and hear the circumstances regarding the odd problem of Heiburg.

After they parted from each other for the moment in that place, Calensia ran to put the commotion in order, while Lux was being led away by Philuffy and escaped from there.

It was tense when they escaped while hiding in the back alley where there was no sign of people, but an unexpected supporter came.

「—This is surprising. You two weren't at the inn, so I was searching.」

Midway, they encountered Noct who came for information exchange, and she hid them using her Drake's camouflage ability.

Noct checked that there was no Abyss or other Drag-Rides around, then she brought the two of them until a safe area.

After receiving first-aid treatment from a doctor—they immediately went to meet Calensia.

Part 3

「Please forgive my rudeness before this, Lux-san. My thanks for stopping a violence that was perpetrated by a person of our Heiburg Republic.」

Calensia who arrived at the tea house that was slightly far away first bowed her head quietly and apologized.

It appeared that the tea house was originally designed to be a quiet place, there was no other customer inside.

It seemed that Brandish of Cutting Punishment was arrested due to the violation of military regulation. He would be imprisoned until the return of the general.

In any case he got his arms and legs broken, so he couldn't move anyway.

「Please don't worry about it. After all right now we are also people who are infiltrating and hiding in Heiburg. More importantly, can you remember about her? Your cousin—」

Calensia affirmed about that point without hesitation.

「Yes. It's about Stefa isn't it..... Thinking back now, it has been a few years since I met her the last time. No, I'm scared to meet her. If she knew about the change of her friend Rosa, how would she react..... When I imagined that, I became unable to meet her.」

「What is happening in Heiburg right now? What is Lady Rosa trying to do?」

Calensia looked down, her intelligent expression was clouded.

And then the tone of her voice lowered a notch more and she directed a gaze that looked pleading at Lux.

「You two Drag-Knights of the New Kingdom—furthermore it's Lux-san who is a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins, are coming here while hiding your

identity, so you surely already have an idea. It's about the transaction in the Underground Market, right?」

Lux confirmed it wordlessly.

Then Calensia let out a sigh of resignation and then she took in a deep breath.

「Then, I will talk. Just what in the world is happening right now inside this Heiburg Republic—」

Like that, the girl began to tell a long story.

—

More than ten years ago.

The military of the Heiburg Republic received damage from a skirmish against Arcadia Empire, and the backlash from that was strengthened.

Especially since the arms dealer Hayes began to get involved with Heiburg's military, the momentum of military expansion was accelerated.

Right now, entry into the Ruin Gigas was forbidden, but at that time the production facility inside it was operated at full capacity. A large amount of Drag-Rides were manufactured within a few years.

The existence of Drag-Rides was greatly related to national power. Even in other sectors such as industry and commerce, Drag-Rides were something indispensable.

Because the production of that essential Drag-Ride was controlled by Hayes and the military, the meaning of a republic system already disappeared.

The military expansion didn't slow down any, and in less than a few years a military regime was established.

「What do you think happened after that? Of course, Heiburg sheltered the rebel army of the Old Arcadia Empire and Hayes attempted to destroy your country. The reason for that was—」

Calensia suddenly cut off her words and asked Lux that.

The Ruin of this country, Gigas was completely controlled.

A few months ago, they thought that perhaps Hayes was harboring some kind

of fixation towards Lux and Airi, the imperial family of the Old Empire, but now they could also read her other motive.

「Could she be—trying to put all the other Ruins under her control too?」

Perhaps it was an accident or perhaps there was some other thing at work, the New Kingdom that possessed the largest territory had three Ruins existing in it.

If the New Kingdom was conquered and ruled, it would be easy to conquer the other remaining three Ruins too.

The point was, although her path was different, there was a possibility that the ^{Hayes} Third Imperial Princess was also aiming to reach Avalon.

「At this present time, this is nothing more than a mere guess, but after she obtained the New Kingdom in her hand, what did she intend to do I wonder?」

Here Calensia muttered as though she was talking to herself.

Hayes who climbed up to the position as Heiburg's strategist in a short time planned to conquer the Ruins of the other countries too after that.

But, different from the New Kingdom where she had a connection of fate with, she was unable to easily make a move on the Ruins of the other countries.

If she forcefully invaded the other countries, all the remaining countries would unite and oppose her.

If that happened, putting aside whether she would be able to prevail or not, it would surely become troublesome.

「Then, don't tell me, the true identity of Dragon Marauder is—」

「Yes. I believe that they are the groundwork prepared by the strategist Hayes and the male military commander of that time conspiring with each other.」

If Heiburg was unable to move its military in the open, they would make use of mercenary Drag-Knights and invade the Ruins of the other countries.

Lux already had a hunch that the backer of the mercenary group that was so skilled like that wouldn't be anyone small. He could accept that there was such manipulation behind Dragon Marauder.

「Then, even now Heiburg is controlling and manipulating that Dragon Marauder?」

「No. In my opinion, that's not the case.」

Lux's question that stepped into the heart of the matter was responded to by Calensia with a shake of her head.

「Since Hayes died in battle, Dragon Marauder put some distance from Heiburg, because they thought that after the plan to take over the New Kingdom was crushed, and the movement of Gigas was also stopped, at that rate the Heiburg Republic would only get weaker.」

Dragon Marauder that had already gathered considerable battle force considered that their business with Heiburg had been settled and so they abandoned Heiburg, then they aimed to reach Avalon by their own hands.

There was no profit to be made even if they stayed on board a sinking ship made from mud. That was how it was.

Hayes who became strategist and conspired with the male military commander vanished.

The rebel army of the Old Empire was also destroyed, and the mercenary Dragon Marauder was also breaking away.

Like that, the populace would try to rise in opposition seeing the government was weakening.

There, a new powerful person—Rosa Granhide who was affiliated with the military was selected from among many people.

Although she had overwhelming power as a Drag-Knight, she had a problematic personality.

However, there was no other existence who could become a new pillar to recover Heiburg that was in the process of weakening.

And then, for some reason the commanding officer of the military abruptly died from sickness after that and got buried.

In the first place the man was reigning as a foolish ruler, so there was nobody who lamented his death, but then Rosa was snugly placed as the replacement

of that person.

A new rule of military regime by an up-and-coming powerful person.

But just when such rule was going to start, the Lords swooped down and proposed to hold a talk with all the countries.

It seemed that was how it was if the chronology until the present situation was spoken of concisely.

「Then, you are saying that there won't be a transaction with Dragon Marauder anymore in the shadow of the Underground Market this time?」

If that was the case, then Lux's mission would lose its meaning.

If he didn't catch the enemy's transaction in the act, he would be unable to prove who was the traitor. In other words the conquering of Babel in the New Kingdom also couldn't be stopped.

If that was the case, what Lux could do was only to return to Triport in the New Kingdom's west territory and defeat the Abyss appearing around Babel but—

「No—there will be one last transaction. On the day the next Underground Market is opened, there will be one more negotiation with Dragon Marauder.」

Calensia said that with a nervous look.

That was to say, it was a clear proof of her betrayal as the aide of Heiburg's Seven Dragon Paladin.

「Behind the scenes of the Underground Market, Dragon Marauder will offer the treasure of Ruins to Heiburg, in exchange they will receive Drag-Rides and dozens of troops. That is the arrangement. All of the troops will be former slaves, they won't be traced even if they move to another country. That should be the last transaction of this time.」

「.....」

There was only one chance to catch the enemy's transaction in the act.

However if he could grasp this chance, not only could he save the New Kingdom, he would also be able to grasp some clue about Dragon Marauder.

The combat force that could participate in the mission this time was Lux and Philuffy, and if they were lucky the Triad would also be present to participate at that time.

Because Rosa and her Servants were conquering Babel in Triport, there was no doubt that their side would be at an advantage if the situation continued like that.

「If you two could just attend the banquet in the Underground Market, on that day I will take you two to the crime scene. As the exchange material, Heiburg will receive the secret medicine—Elixir, that is currently only handled by Dragon Marauder. If at that time you can catch them in the act and arrest them under the name of the Seven Dragon Paladins, that would be splendid.」

At this kind of time, the post of Seven Dragon Paladin that was affiliated with the world alliance would work to their advantage.

Originally it should be difficult to interfere with another country, but now it was possible using the pretext of exterminating Dragon Marauder.

「However, is it alright? Calensia-san will—」

Lux wasn't relieved by that plan. He asked Calensia once more.

「Yes. Hearing that Stefa is worrying about me, helps me to resolve myself. My family was taken hostage by Lady Rosa and I had no other choice than to obey her. But—if Lux-san would cooperate with me, I might be able to destroy her stronghold. I don't want to see her rampaging in my homeland even more than this.」

「.....I understand. Then, please help us on that day, five days from now. I, too, am planning to act as carefully as possible, but if something happens please don't hesitate to consult me.」

「Thank you.....very much. Lux-san.」

Calensia nodded with a powerless smile and she stood up.

She told Lux that she had no face to meet Stefa, so she wanted him to stay quiet about her to Stefa.

「Let's go back too, Phi-chan.」

「Yes.....」

Philuffy who was observing the progression of the talk without saying a single word lent her shoulder to Lux and helped him to stand.

Lux and Philuffy would stand by inside the inn until five days later, when the Underground Market was opened.

Episode 3 – Infiltration, And Then

Part 1

Although Calensia had settled the situation in order for them, the commotion in the pleasure quarter was too much.

Because of that, Lux thought to quietly spend the five days in the inn, but—
「Kuh..... ouch ouch ouch!」

Lux was persevering against his injury since the beginning, but pain ran through his body when he tried to move his body.

It was great that he brought down Brandish of Cutting Punishment, one of the Servants, in the bar the other day, but because of that the backlash of working his body too hard visited him.

The terrifying aspect of the rare armament Chain Saw wasn't its cutting power, it was how it inflicted shockwaves on the opponent due to its vibration and left behind severe damage to the flesh body even from above the armor.

Because the armor of his Wyvern was destroyed, Lux fully tasted the effect of the enemy's weapon due to his negligence.

He endured it stoically when talking with Calensia, but he couldn't move for even a step after returning to the inn.

According to the doctor, his muscles were wounded and he was told to rest quietly for a week.

There—

「Then I, will look after Lu-chan, okay?」

Philuffy wore the apron she brought and declared that she would nurse Lux.

She always had the atmosphere of doing things at her own pace, but now she somehow looked in high spirits.

「Here. Open your mouth, aahn」

First, she brought the meal that the inn prepared to Lux, scooped up the food using a spoon, and held it out towards Lux.

「I, I'm fine Phi-chan. You don't need to go that far, I'll be fine after sleeping for a bit.」

「Lu-chan. This time, you did a really dangerous thing.」

Philuffy stared fixedly with a serious face and brought her face close to Lux who was smiling wryly.

She was a girl of few words, but she knew how to pressure someone in her own way.

「Sorry, that's..... I made you worry.」

「I will nurse you for a while. Lu-chan, just sleep.」

She said that, then first she fed Lux.

It might be imprudent to think so, but this might be the first time he saw Philuffy this active.

She nursed Lux constantly like a devoted wife.

The inn gave their customers three meals a day. When he went to the toilet, Philuffy escorted him in moving there, and she also lent him a hand when walking or waking up.

On top of all that, when Lux wanted to read while lying down, she procured things like the rough sketches of the city and so on for him.

She was definitely helpful, but Lux smiled wryly wondering if perhaps she was overdoing it slightly.

But, it seemed that Philuffy personally wouldn't concede the role of taking care of Lux. Lux obediently let her do what she wanted.

「I'll go buying things for a bit. Lu-chan, you need to sleep properly, you know?」

When his childhood friend left those words behind and went away, Lux was relieved.

「It's a bit embarrassing but, it's nostalgic somehow.....」

Fundamentally, as a child, Lux was often nursing Airi.

That was why he really had no recollection of someone looking after him, but there was just that one time Philuffy looked after him when he collapsed from a fever.

At that time, Philuffy thought that Lux would recover if he ate sweets, it was funny—

- Knock knock* After he heard the sound of knocking, the door was opened.

Then, Philuffy who was shopping returned and began to wear her apron quickly.

「Wait, Phi-chan, what are you buying so much like that?」

「Tools for nursing Lu-chan. I'll take off your clothes, so stay still.」

「Eh.....!? Wai-!? What are you—」

Lux showed a perplexed expression, but Philuffy paid it no mind.

Honestly, although the other party was a childhood friend whom he trusted from the bottom of his heart, as expected it was still embarrassing to have a girl the same age as him to see him naked.



But, Philuffy was stripping off Lux until his underwear at her own pace indifferently.

Without pause she made Lux lay down with his face facing the bed, then her fingers traced his back slowly.

At that moment, Philuffy's large breasts touched his back, which caused blood to rush to Lux's head immediately.

It seemed that Philuffy herself wasn't conscious of it, but the softness and elasticity of her voluptuous breasts could be felt enough even from across the apron.

「Wai-, what are you doing Phi-chan!? Wait, ouch ouch ouch ouch-!」

「Here and here, I think?」

Her finger pressured on several spots, checking the place where Lux's muscles and joints were hurt.

She was massaging him to right the distorted muscle while sticking compresses that were coated with medicinal herbs, then she fixed them in place tightly using bandages.

The first-aid treatment was finished in just a few minutes.

「It's finished, Lu-chan. What's left is to rest properly.」

「Tha, thank you, Phi-chan.」

It seemed she rectified the distorted muscles in his body and somehow his body felt comfortable.

Lux said his thanks while being wrapped in a surprise that left him unable to say anything.

「But, it's amazing that you know this kind of healing method. Somehow, it's unexpected—」

「Master taught me when she was training me in martial arts.」

The one she called as master was the captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Magialca.

In order to control her physical ability that was strengthened due to the seed

of an Abyss that was planted inside her body, he was told that Philuffy was going through a lot of hardships.

From Lux's standpoint, there was also the fact that he was unable to save her from Hayes's human experiments, which caused him to feel complicated.

「Is Lu-chan, bothered about the matter of the Abyss?」

「.....」

When he was looking at the chair beside him while lying down on the bed, Philuffy seemed to guess what was inside Lux's heart and muttered that.

But, till the end Philuffy talked with a gentle tone while showing him a faint smile.

「I'm feeling, glad about it. Both me and also Lu-chan, are able to stay alive, besides—right now, I can protect Lu-chan with this power.」

「Eh.....?」

「Because since the past, I always wanted to become like that all the time. In the past, since I said farewell to Lu-chan, I wanted to become able, to fight too.」

「——」

He felt like his chest was struck. He was at a loss for words for a while.

At a glance Philuffy gave a flighty impression, but she was a girl with a really strong core in her heart.

So much so, that sometimes he would be completely enraptured by her.

「Phi-chan, say.....」

Suddenly, Lux reflexively let his voice slip out from his mouth.

At that time when he was going to tell her his words of gratitude, he could hear a quiet sleeper's breathing.

「Zzz..... Lu-chan, you must, rest properly.」

Philuffy was starting to sleep soundly while sitting on the chair with winter sunlight shining down on her.

Lux smiled wryly while watching her sleeping face from the side. He decided to also rest.

「Thank you, Phi-chan.」

He grasped her hand that was always warm and gentle, then he also fell into dream world.

It appeared that he had fatigue amassed mentally from nervousness, because after that he was falling into a deep sleep.

—

—After that, a few hours later.

The two of them passed their time napping comfortably, but there wasn't any particular problem and it became night.

Philuffy brought dinner and she fed him once more, and then they were drinking tea while resting after the meal.

「Lu-chan. Is your body all right?」

「Yep. Thanks to Phi-chan, I'm feeling a lot better.」

「I'm glad.」

After slowly drinking tea while relaxing, Philuffy was reading some kind of book. It seemed that it was a catalogue of the Underground Market that she received along with the tickets the other day.

Inside the catalogue most of the content consisted of weapons or precious metal, but the types of merchandise with scarcity value like rare animals were also mentioned there.

Philuffy was reading it curiously.

「Phi-chan, is there anything that you want? Anything other than food.」

「Animals like cat or dog, I want to try keeping them, perhaps.」

It seemed that she was keeping several pets in her home of Aingram, but right now it was forbidden to keep a pet in the girl's dormitory, so she surely wanted to frolic with an animal after so long.

When they played together after Lux was banished from the imperial court, he recalled how they once played with a wild dog inside a forest.

「Eerr, I don't think it's something that I can get for you right away so, is there anything else that you want?」

「Then, thing that can, make ice cream.」

「What is that?」

Lux tilted his head after hearing the words that he had never heard before.

「It's a machine, to make sweets. It's sweet and cold. Onee-chan said, that she ate it at a foreign country.」

It seemed to be a tool that somehow mixed milk, egg yolk, sugar, and so on, then ice was jammed around them and they were mixed with each other to make the ice cream thing. The sweets lover Philuffy seemed to show her interest in it.

「Then, in the future, other than becoming Relie-san's bodyguard, perhaps you can also open a confectionery shop.」

「Yes, I want to.」

Philuffy's cheeks loosened happily hearing Lux's suggestion.

Surely she was imagining the future image of herself being surrounded by a lot of sweets.

Though somehow, he also had a hunch that she was going to eat all of the sweets by herself—

「Lu-chan, when this battle is over, what will you do?」

「Eh.....?」

He was asked back and he pondered.

Right now he was Lisha's exclusive knight, and a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins who represented the New Kingdom, but if for example they reached Avalon just like the Lords said, then perhaps there would be no more large battles happening.

The reason was, if they could reach Avalon, all the Ruins would be put under

control, and in that case they wouldn't need to fight the Abyss anymore.

Of course, there was also the conflict between fellow humans, so there was no way that battle would be gone completely, but at the very least, when everything was taken care of five months from now, then perhaps there would be no more large battles.

At that time, perhaps it would also be fine for Lux to think that for the moment what he ought to do had reached a point where he could pause.

From the beginning, he was fighting in order to change the Old Empire as an imperial family member.

In order to create a country where unreasonable rule and discrimination were gone, and people could obtain happiness as though it was the norm.

If he was able to realize that ideal, he thought that he ought to pull back after that.

If the Abyss were gone, then surely there wouldn't even be any need for him to serve Lisha.

「I still haven't decided, but I wonder, if perhaps there is something that even I can do?」

「Onee-chan, is looking for a bodyguard. If Lu-chan becomes Onee-chan's secretary, all of us can live together.」

「.....Yes, that also sounds fun.」

Lux would become Relie's bodyguard and secretary instead of Philuffy, while she would manage a confectionery shop.

Lux thought that such future might also be fun.

And above all else, he was happy with the feeling of Relie and Philuffy who were always treating him the same even with his status as a criminal.

「Then, should we take a bath?」

「Yes. Phi-chan, you enter first, I'm fine right now.」

Honestly speaking, although his fatigue had more or less vanished, his body was still unable to move satisfactorily.

This was a high class inn with a large public bath attached at its side, but the bathing time was divided with man and woman entering alternately.

If he wasn't mistaken, the females should be the ones who got the first turn today, so Lux urged Philuffy to go first, but Philuffy shook her head quietly.

「Lu-chan will also enter with me. If not, it will be difficult.」

「Eh.....!?」

Lux who heard that was bewildered.

He didn't dare to think about it, but for her to try to do that even at an inn of a foreign country was—

「Wai-, wait a second. As expected that's impossible right!? Besides, the bath in this inn isn't a mixed bath.....」

「It's fine. I received permission from the inn's staff, so we can reserve to enter alone at the end.」

Philuffy declared so. Within her dreamy expression, there was a light flashing inside her eyes.

「No but, is such thing really permitted?」

As expected it was unthinkable that a mixed bathing of man and woman could be so easily allowed.

「When I said, that we are on honeymoon, they gave permission.」

「You are using our fake setting too well-! They are absolutely misunderstanding!?」

「Also, because I handed them a bit of money.」

「Don't be like Relie-san only in that kind of aspect you know-!?」

Even his desperate retorts were in vain. Philuffy was unconcernedly preparing for entering the bath.

At this kind of time, there was nothing he could do when he couldn't move his body properly.

No—surely this was simply Philuffy thinking to help Lux who was unable to

move his body freely.

「At the very least wrap a towel around your bodyyyyy.....！」

While Lux's scream was resounding, Philuffy helped him enter the bath where Lux needed incredible fortitude.

Part 2

「Haa..... Really our deepest apologies. We have been a bother when Lux-san and Philuffy-san were actually enjoying yourselves.」

「Uachaa..... I wonder if this can be counted as crossing the line already? Even if this is a honeymoon, still-」

「It can't be helped. Lux-kun too is a young boy. Rather, perhaps he should be praised to endure until this long in this situation—then, what is your impression?」

「Please stop joking around already-!？」

The Triad—Noct, Tillfur, and Sharis who were lining up inside the room were making fun of Lux in turns. Lux became bright red and objected.

After they had just gotten out of the bath and returned to their room, when Philuffy was helping Lux with changing clothes, the three arrived and it became a situation where the misunderstanding wasn't stopping.

「Well, let's stop teasing Lux-kun with this much. More importantly, it's great that you are safe even after such an incident happened.」

After Sharis smiled while saying that, Lux reported what happened the other day to the three once more.

How he accidentally met Stefa Hersmice, then he contacted Calensia because of her request, and then, he received a promise that she would guide them in the Underground Market.

「Then, Dragon Marauder was really connected with Heiburg? Nice job there Lux-chi. With this, the New Kingdom can be saved!」

「No. Your voice is too loud Tillfur. It seems it's hard for voices to go through the walls here, but you are too careless.」

When Tillfur raised her voice happily, Noct reminded her calmly.

On the other hand, Sharis was nodding ‘yep yep’ in satisfaction.

「That aide Callesia who was together with Rosa huh. If what she said is correct, a backroom deal with Dragon Marauder will definitely take place in that underground market.」

「Yes. For now, I think it will be fine if we can catch them in the act. Callesia-san said that Drag-Knights from the Resistance who are slipping in among Heiburg’s military will also give their assistance.」

「There, if we can expose Lady Rosa’s crime and take away her position as a Seven Dragon Paladin, she will lose her authority, is that right?」

Lux nodded at Sharis’s question and,

「It’s not certain, but the conquering of Babel should be halted temporarily after that. Using that chance, perhaps we can open discussion with Heiburg so we might form a united front.」

When Lux said that with a serious expression, Tillfur tilted her head with a puzzled look.

「Eh? What do you mean, reconciling with Heiburg? Isn’t it fine if we just report them to the world alliance like that? They are the traitor after all.」

「No. Looking at the actual problem, I judge that for now we should overlook it. The Lords said that they would attack at the time the traitor is discovered, so depending on their judgment standard, there is a risk that Babel and Triport near it will become a battlefield.」

「Either way Heiburg’s connection with Dragon Marauder will be severed with this right? Then it will be better instead if we grasp that weakness to make a deal so that Heiburg will cooperate with the New Kingdom. It’s something like that.」

「Right. If Lady Rosa loses her standing and Callesia-san steps forward, I think such path is possible.」

「Uwa, somehow it’s amazing. It feels really political.....」

Tillfur made a bitter face at the talk of Sharis and Lux, then,

「Yes. Unfortunately this is a political talk. After all, we too are knights.」

「Hmmph. And, what should we do then, Lux-chi?」

「Honestly, the Underground Market must be guarded really strictly, so all of you won't be able to approach easily. Until the matter is settled, I want Noct's Drake to probe the surroundings and wait watchfully so no hindrance will interfere.」

Sharis nodded shortly at Lux's suggestion.

「I don't mind doing that but, a division commander of Dragon Marauder might come right? Will you be fine with only missy Philuffy?」

「.....It's all right. If their battle strength is following my estimate, then we will manage somehow.」

「Hmmph. Even though we too have powered up quite a bit, you can't rely on us?」

Tillfur puffed up her cheeks with a tone that was lightly joking but,

「You shouldn't trouble Lux-kun, Tillfur. Now, we will leave for now. You two have a good rest until the day of the decisive battle.」

By the way, the Triad entered this country using counterfeit credentials that Magialca prepared, so it would be dangerous if they acted too showy.

But, the true reason why Lux refused their participation in battle was actually due to a different factor.

「.....Is it, okay? Not letting everyone fight together with us?」

「Yes. This time, there is something that is bothering me a bit.」

Philuffy finally opened her mouth to question Lux. Lux nodded with a worried expression.

The incident at the pleasure quarters that they got dragged into the other day.

The method of Heiburg's military that was led by Rosa was just too merciless. If the Triad got involved in this in that kind of shape, surely he would regret it.

That was why, he didn't want to involve them as much as possible.

「Then, let's sleep soon, Phi-chan.」

「Yes. Night, Lu-chan.」

Lux called at Philuffy, turned off the room's light, and the inside of the room was soon filled with silence.

With this, the preparations for the day of the operation were in place.

At the Underground Market, together with Calensia as well as the Resistance, they would catch Heiburg in the act of making a deal with Dragon Marauder.

From the report, Rosa was also still at Triport, so this should be doable.

But, he wondered why.

Something that was like a different unease was tormenting Lux.

Part 3

And then, Lux spent a few days in the inn for recuperating, and then finally he infiltrated into Heiburg's Underground Market.

The place where the market took place was beside the military facility practice ground, underground the guild of the great company Elminant.

Lux who was wearing a dress suit and Philuffy who was wearing a dress entered inside while holding hands.

Bringing in a Sword Device was allowed, but in exchange the sheath was locked with a metal cover.

The thing would take time and effort to be taken off without using the key, but with the information from Relie and Magialca, they had thought of a countermeasure for this.

Just as the name Underground Market implied, a market place made from stone was spreading in the surrounding in a circular shape.

Rare animals, rare food ingredients, artwork, precious metals, Drag-Ride parts—furthermore even suspicious drugs were lined up along with their prices.

「This drug, what is it?」

When Philuffy muttered while tilting her head, a middle aged merchant in charge of the stand grinned.

「Oo, you have good eyes there young miss. This is a stimulant. How about it, young master? It will make you energetic yeah.」

「It will make Lu-chan energetic? Then this one—」

「Wait, stop it Phi-chan! That thing might be different from what you are thinking!」

After Lux stopped her in panic, next Philuffy looked with deep interest at the

dried food made from rare fish, tried to sample an old wine, then he stopped her because it would obstruct their mission after this. They were spending a peaceful time.

This event was given a suspicious name like the Underground Market, when in actual fact, while it was indeed fishy, but it still felt just barely legal.

The atmosphere was also more upright than Lux thought, but his tension wouldn't relax.

Lux was putting up his guard observing if there were any gazes that were doubting the two of them while grasping the terrain by pretending to look around the market.

According to the story of Callesia who passed by them before this, Dragon Marauder wouldn't appear here for the transaction.

They would show up at the facility beside this building, in Heiburg's underground Drag-Ride hangar.

Of course, there was a path here that connected to the hangar, so there wouldn't be any problem.

「.....」

While Lux was in a daze, Callesia showed up in the Underground Market and beckoned them with her hand.

「Over here Lux-san. The transaction with Dragon Marauder is going on. The path to the hangar is—」

Urged by Callesia, Lux and Philuffy followed behind her and they passed through several tough steel doors.

Led onto a path where the signs of other humans were rapidly vanishing, they arrived at a place that was tinged with strange enthusiasm in the air.

There was a huge metal cage in the shape of a hemisphere, while an Abyss and a Drag-Knight were fighting inside it.

「That's it, beat it up!」

「What are you doing, don't just run away!」

Angry yells were flying around. Influential looking nobles were yelling with fervor.

「This is, what in the world—」

「It's an extermination of captured Abyss as well as the training for Drag-Knights. Of course, in reality it is just a mortal combat for betting. It's a show for a part of the nobles with a bad hobby.」

「Why, is such thing—?」

When Lux asked with a dubious face, Calensia smiled powerlessly.

「I don't know. Perhaps it's a tool to threaten other people, or perhaps it is to heighten the people's competitiveness by displaying strength, but either way, right now it seems that a medicine experiment is being carried out. It's for the sake of learning how to use the mysterious secret medicine called Elixir that was refined from the Ruins—」

「.....」

The reality that was too inhuman caused Lux to frown while following her from behind.

Before long they were let into a scraggy room made from stone. There Calensia stopped walking.

「This way. If you two hide behind here, soon the division commander Vine from Dragon Marauder should show up. If you take him by surprise while wearing your Drag-Rides, you should be able to subdue him simply.」

Saying that, Calensia took out a key from her breast pocket.

It was the key for taking off the cover that was locking their Sword Devices in order to enter this underground market.

Calensia had told Lux beforehand that she would unlock the cover for them—but,

「Eh..... why?」

For some reason the key couldn't enter the keyhole.

Calensia tilted her head and began to get impatient.

「Fo, forgive me. It looks like I mistook the key. I will quickly go take the right key, so please hide around here for now.」

「No, Callesia-san, I want you to wait. There is another strange thing.」

「—Eh?」

Callesia was backing away from Lux who was showing a perplexed expression.

「There is no exit in this place where we are hiding. Besides this is too strange. Before we came here, we were watching out the situation around us in the Underground Market, but—」

So to speak, Lux was on guard against assassins that were mixed in among the crowd.

「Even though we had caused that much commotion in the pleasure quarters, we didn't hear any rumor about it. The security of the soldiers was also lax. Everything is going too well. The situation is unnatural for a military that is normally being managed by Lady Rosa with her way that is like that.」

「-.....!？」

Callesia lowered her eyebrows at what Lux pointed out and she averted her gaze.

「Since then, we didn't meet Stefa just as you said. Could it be, at that point you had been threatened? That she would be killed if you didn't lead us into a trap—」

Silence.

After the quietness, Callesia's expression clouded.

Her shoulders were shaking fiercely and she directed an anxious gaze at Lux.

「So you, saw through it.....you aren't, going to kill me?」

Lux shook his head seeing the self-deprecating smile Callesia made.

「I'm not planning to blame you. However, we also cannot get trapped and die here no matter what. Can you understand that?」

Callesia's shoulders dropped.

She hung her head down powerlessly, as though she was resigned of something.

And then, she confessed the truth piece by piece.

「Soon, one of the Servants will come here, in order to collect a large amount of Elixir that was used until now for the experiment in that arena. You two, please get away from here right away. If not—」

「No, I will remain here. If not Calensia-san will also meet a tragic experience. On top of that, I swear I'll defeat the King of Vices in this Heiburg.」

—

「Unfortunately, I cannot agree with that talk you seee. The transaction is over alreadyy.」

—

「—.....!？」

Right after Lux muttered that, a cloudy voice of a girl came from behind.

Almost at the same time, the sword belt of Bahamut that Lux wore on his waist was plucked off by something.

When he turned around in panic, an unexpected sight flew into his eyes.

「How-!? Why are you here—!？」

A red haired girl wearing a wicked smile on her face.

Rosa Granhide wearing Heiburg's military uniform and iron blue Drag-Ride was standing in front of them.

The Drag-Ride's hand was toying with a black Sword Device that had just been stolen from Lux.

「Myy? That's my line. Why are you in this kind of place I wonder, Lux Arcadia. But well, let me answer your question. I was here right from the beginning. Since that time I departed to Triport leading my subordinates to conquer Babel.」

「There is no way that's.....true. There shouldn't be any sign of you leaving from the New Kingdom since a few days ago! And yet—」

When he was about to say that, Lux realized in surprise and he held his breath.

Come to think of it, the report from the Triad itself was strange.

Rosa was showing her face since the first day, but she was only walking around in the front line base without even participating in conquering Babel. There was also no sign of her commanding.

「You put a body double there since the beginning in order to attend this transaction—so it was like that.」

Rosa chuckled hearing Lux's mutter.

「You noticed too late theree. I held a bit of expectation at the wiles of the Black Hero who destroyed the Old Arcadia Empire by himself, but it looks like you aren't even at my level at all.」

Rosa licked her lower lips and grinned fearlessly.

But, there was something that surprised Lux more than her appearance here.

「Why? Gorynch should be a land battle type Divine Drag-Ride. The camouflage function when you appeared just now should be a Drake's ability. Just how in the world—」

「My? You forgot already? The Divine Raiment of my Gorynch, Tartaros Frame can rearrange and modify its own armor. It will need some time but, it can switch to any of the three types you know? Now, the service from me is only until here. I'll have you surrender to mee.」

Rosa pointed the muzzle of her Breath Gun to Lux while looking triumphant.

Lux, Philuffy, and Calensia weren't wearing Drag-Rides.

Furthermore their remaining Sword Devices had the sheaths locked.

There was no chance of victory left for them.

「You won't, kill us?」

「Only a third rate would kill you heree. This is a rare chance where I can obtain the highest quality hostage into my hands. If I captured you and that ojou-sama, you two will be really useful in extorting the New Kingdom. Aa, now

that you mention it, there are also the three small fries loitering around you two. I'll have them killed as examples. After they are thoroughly raped and used as guinea pigs, I'll send their corpses back to the New Kingdom as a warning. J



「—Tsu!？」

Seeing Rosa's wicked smile that hinted about the Triad, blood rushed to Lux's head.

But, in reality he could do nothing at this stage.

「Calen, the punishment for you will be after that. Even though I've been so kind to let that cousin of yours live—. Your disciplining is still lacking it seems.」

「Kuh.....!？」

Calensia's face turned pale and her shoulders were shaking. In that timing, Rosa's gaze was taken off from Lux and Philuffy for a moment.

It was a very little opening of her heart due to her conviction of her victory.

Lux didn't let that timing get away and unsheathed his remaining Sword Device.

「—!？」

Rosa reacted and quickly pulled the trigger of her Breath Gun.

While the countless light bullets were fired through the air, Lux was already equipping his Wyvern.

「—Howling Roar!」

Lux defended against the barrage with his barrier, at the same time he unleashed a shockwave from his head armor.

He held back Rosa, at the same time he carried Philuffy and Calensia with both arms and took distance backwards.

「How, the Sword Device's sheath should be locked—!？」

Calensia who saw that raised her voice with an amazed look.

How did Lux unsheathe his Sword Device even though Calensia hadn't opened the lock just now?

Using the physical strength of an Abyss that Philuffy possessed and metal fitting that she used as hairclip, she quickly undid the lock for Lux when Rosa showed an opening.

That was the plan that Lux and Philuffy prepared beforehand.

The moment Rosa was slightly pushed back by Howling Roar, Lux skated in the air in order to attack her.

「Hah! You're better than I thought. But it's unfortunate. You cannot make use of Wyvern's mobility inside this cramped underground passage!」

「Kuh.....!?」

Light instantly surged from Rosa's armor and bullets were fired like an explosion.

It was the application of a basic technique, Break Purge that released off the armor while shooting a part of them like a buckshot.

In order to defend against the barrage attack from the fired armor parts, Lux opened his Wyvern's barrier in full and endured.

「—.....This is-!?」

The moment the storm stopped, before his eyes the figure of Gorynych had completely changed compared to before.

From the form of a Drake with Radar attached on its shoulder and four legs, into the form of a land battle type that was covered with thick armor.

「Tartaros Frame – Normal Mode.」

The Divine Raiment of Gorynych that modified its own armor by combining its special armament, the unmanned armors Twelve Vice.

What Rosa selected was most likely the basic model of a land battle type.

Blades were growing from various parts of the armor with a sickle shaped weapon, Scythe in one hand. That form resembled an ominous god of death.

It was standing in the way of the returning path that connected to the Underground Market, completely blocking the escape route.

「Can I ask you to keep it moderate even if you struggle in vaiin? No matter what, it's just too insulting if you are trying to take me on with that kind of torn up piece of junk.」

Rosa who was convinced of her own superiority was boasting triumphantly

seeing her opponent's appearance.

Because Lux's Wyvern got its shoulder destroyed at the battle five days ago against Brandish of the Servants, one of its arms couldn't function properly.

And then, Bahamut's Sword Device was still stolen by Rosa.

At this rate the result of the fight was clear.

Callesia showed a sorrowful expression. At that moment, Lux's voice roared.

「Callesia-san! Escape to the corner of the passage! I'll lure the Drag-Ride to the front!」

「—!?」

Callesia reacted to his voice and moved towards the corner of the passage. In that moment, Rosa's Gorynych was entangled by countless wires.

Those wires came from Pile Anchor, the special armament that was fired from every part of the Divine Drag-Ride Typhon that Philuffy was wearing.

Philuffy who had went around behind Rosa unnoticed summoned her Drag-Ride and launched her attack.

「—Hmph. You just kept staying quiet so I thought you aren't going to do anything, but sneaking around in the shadows like that.」

「Get away, from Lu-chan.」

The instant Philuffy muttered that, the wires coiling around Gorynych was pulled towards Typhon at high speed.

Typhon that Philuffy was wearing immediately ran through the passage and dragged Rosa to outside the hangar—into the military practice ground.

The outside had been covered with dusk, cold rain was starting to pour down.

At present, the majority of the Drag-Knights of Heiburg were absent because they went to conquer Babel. The practice ground was empty.

Lux also followed Philuffy and Rosa and went outside. There he didn't see any signs of other ambushers.

Like this, this time it was them who were in an advantageous position. Lux

was convinced of that.

He exchanged glances with Callesia, where she nodded to him briefly in resolve.

「Lux-san, Philuffy-san! Please take care of Lady Rosa! I'll block the path towards the practice grounds and stop the military's reinforcement.」

「Please. I'll defeat Rosa here with her!」

Rosa herself had confessed about her backroom dealing with Dragon Marauder.

The evil design of the King of Vices that weakened the New Kingdom while conquering Babel at the same time.

(If we can defeat her—Rosa with this, then everything will end.)

The unreasonable reign of the military that was running rampant in this Heiburg too, and also the unhappiness of the people which was caused from it—everything would end.

Perhaps in order to learn tactics in a situation that was like a real battle, this practice ground had obstacles like trees and bushes growing.

The situation seemed to be even for both sides.

Next it would be a match to take back the Sword Device of Bahamut that Rosa took away.

If he had to say, their side was in advantage.

And yet for some reason there was an unknown anxiety residing inside Lux's chest.

Even he himself didn't understand what made him hesitate.

(—Right now isn't the time to think about unnecessary things! If we don't win this battle, it will be over for us!)

Lux took a deep breath and switched his feelings.

And then he skated after Philuffy inside the forest of the practice ground that was covered with jet black darkness.

『Phi-chan! Are you okay!? What happened with Rosa?』

He sent his voice through Dragon Voice to Philuffy so Rosa wouldn't be able to guess their intentions.

『She is, still bound by wires. If it's in this place it's fine even if we fight, I'll release the wire and attack.』

『-.....!? Watch out!』

『You two look really leisurely while being inside the garden of someone's housee. But it's really unfortunate thouugh—it's you two who got caught in a trap.』

The moment they heard the sarcastic laugh of Rosa, Philuffy moved.

Every part of Rosa's armor that was bound by Pile Anchor was pulled closer when the wires were rolled back. At the same time Philuffy pulled back her right hand and took a punching stance.

On the other hand Rosa who was making a faint grin readied her big sickle shaped weapon—the Scythe and lifted it up.

(Rosa's balance is broken because she is getting pulled. If they strike at the same time, it will be Philuffy's win!)

Lux drove his Wyvern toward the fight while making that judgment. Right at that instant.

『I was wondering how skilled you are after especially coming here to spy—but it looks like I was underestimated huh.』

『—!?』

Every joint part of Gorynch that Rosa wore were instantly disassembled midair. The restraints of Pile Anchor that wrapped everywhere was disconnected.

At the same time Gorynch was enveloped with an ominous purple light that immediately connected to the disassembled armor parts—and reconstructed them back.

『Such, method.....!?』

Due to the transformation ability of her Divine Raiment 《Tartaros Frame》, she temporarily disassembled her Normal Mode, and then after removing the restraints, she immediately reconstructed her armor back to Normal Mode.

She erased her disadvantage in less than a few moments and prepared the stance of counterattack.

But, the inertia from the motion of Philuffy pulling Rosa toward herself was in effect.

The result, Typhon's fist that thrust out as counter hit empty air, on the other hand the blade of Rosa's Scythe moved towards the torso while Typhon's fist crossed beside her.

「Split into two.」

The gathered energy was focused on the edge of the Scythe.

It pierced the barrier of Typhon that boasted solid defensive power, but Philuffy's left arm barely came in between and blocked the attack.

But—even so a terrific impact hit her whole body.

When the edge of the Scythe was slashed to the end without pause, it left a crack on her armor.

「.....-!？」

Philuffy who was falling backward let out a faint anguish into her expressionless face.

「Phi-chan-!？」

Lux skated with his half-broken Wyvern to try to help her, but before his eyes six unmanned Drag-Rides stood in his way.

Twelve Vice—the Drag-Rides that were the special armaments of Gorynch consisted of two flying type Drag-Rides, two land battle type Drag-Rides, and two special equipment type Drag-Rides.

They attacked Lux with movement of different system as though they were coordinating with each other.

It seemed because of their unmanned trait, their movement was simple and

easy to predict.

But, in his current situation where he couldn't use Bahamut, he was unable to simply break through them.

(I can only reduce their number with Critical Hit using Scale Blade!)

Even though he thought that, in this situation where his Wyvern's one arm was broken, it was difficult to match the timing for counter when the unmanned Drag-Rides attacked simultaneously.

「Now then, first—it's one down. I wonder how you will feel when you see your comrade being killed right in front of you?」

In that opening Rosa drove her Gorynych and swung down the tip of her Scythe towards Philuffy's torso.

But, the moment it was going to hit, her usual absentminded voice could be heard.

「It's okay, Lu-chan.」

Right after that, an unmanned dark grey Drag-Ride that Rosa controlled was pulled in front of Typhon and became a shield.

「—What!?」

Rosa's eyes opened wide in bewilderment seeing her Scythe's attack was blocked by her own Twelve Vice that she controlled.

Right after Philuffy fell, she fired her Pile Anchor and instantly pulled one of the Twelve Vice towards herself.

The moment the Scythe's tip pierced the armor, Philuffy shifted the unmanned armor shielding her aside and sealed the movement of the Scythe.

At the same time, while still in the falling posture, she moved Typhon's armored leg and kicked up at Rosa's Gorynych.

「Kuu.....!?」

If it was an average Drag-Knight who used a technique like that, they would lose their balance and tumble down. Because of that it was an unusable kicking technique.

But for Philuffy who possessed a tough flesh body and had mastered the martial arts that was taught by Magialca, and exactly because she was using Typhon, this special battle style that was unique to her became possible.

Rosa's Gorynch that was kicked up to the air for more than ten meters was entangled by several Pile Anchors that were fired from both shoulders and the back armor.

Wires were rolling around the whole Drag-Ride, preventing Rosa to escape by disassembling her armor using Twelve Vice.

At the same time the Pile Anchor that was fired from the right hand armor stretched to right beside her, capturing the second unmanned Drag-Ride and reeled it in towards her hand.

Typhon's right hand caught it, and then that hand was wrapped with light as though it was burning. Energy was converging into that hand.

Right after that, Gorynch that was floating midair was reeled in one go, at the same time the special armament that was installed into Typhon's right hand was activated.

「—Biting Flare.」

When the energy from the right hand was transferred, the caught unmanned Drag-Ride exploded.

Rosa got hit by the fragments and shockwave of the exploded armor and she was sent flying to far away backwards.

Philuffy didn't directly explode Rosa's Gorynch was because Rosa was still keeping Bahamut's Sword Device and also in consideration of Rosa's life itself.

Even so, enough damage should have been inflicted after Rosa's barrier was pierced and her armor smashed like that. Here a strange situation occurred.

「SHE DID ITTTT!」

「NOW, BRING ROSA DOWWWWN-!」

「REVENGE! KILL HER AND STOP THE TYRANNY!」

Ten-odd Drag-Rides entered inside the military's practice ground.

Most likely, they were the members of the Resistance that Calensia mentioned, the movement that was opposing Heiburg's military regime.

At the timing when Philuffy stopped moving from the recoil of her attack, the general purpose Drag-Rides of the Resistance pursued Rosa who was blown away into the forest.

「Please wait! Killing her now is still too—」

Lux was facing the unmanned Drag-Rides of Twelve Vice while trying to stop them, but they didn't show any signs of stopping.

「What are you saying! This woman, the current military of Heiburg, how much do you think they have done to us!? It can only be now! We'll kill this King of Vices and win back our peace!」

「Yeah, kill her! Bring her down!」

「Clear away Heiburg's darkness!」

More than ten Drag-Rides charged into the forest as one.

At the same time, the unmanned Drag-Rides of Twelve Vice that were attacking Lux headed towards Rosa's position all at once.

「What's the meaning of this? Are they going to protect Lady Rosa?」

No, that wasn't what he should be afraid of.

Even after getting hit by Biting Flare, she was still moving her special armaments without problem.

In other words—the invitation towards that forest was a trap.

「Be careful, Lu-chan. That person, is strong. I somehow got back only your Sword Device but—」

Philuffy who stood beside Lux told him while sighing slightly.

Even while Rosa was receiving the attack of Biting Flare, she simultaneously disassembled and modified her armor, dispersing the impact to the limit.

As expected from a powerful person who was appointed as one of the Seven Dragon Paladins, her skill wasn't normal.

Even while feeling astonishment, Lux quickly severed the lock on his other Sword Device using his Wyvern's Blade.

And then, he dispelled the Wyvern armor in order to switch into Bahamut.

「.....-!? Wait—if Lady Rosa is safe, then hiding inside that forest」

A trap that showed a pretension of rallying herself over.

That time when Lux noticed Rosa's aim, a dark murmur resounded inside the night's darkness.

「Tartaros Frame – Rapid Fire Mode」

Right after that, a part of the forest was blown away by explosion.

Gorynych transformed into a huge fortress of armaments. The Resistance members who entered her firing range were completely hauled up.

「Gu, GYAAAAAH.....!？」

The men of the Resistance were covered in fire with their armor smashed. They rolled around on the ground while writhing in agony.

While Lux who was taken by surprise was bewildered, Gorynych modified its form even further.

「Tartaros Frame – ^{Sky Fortress Form} Sky Force Mode」

Four Wyverns were combined on both shoulders into huge gun batteries there. Rosa moved outside the practice ground with that form.

「You are running away, Rosa Granhide!?」

When Lux yelled in surprise at the unexpected movement of the enemy, Rosa replied back with Dragon Voice.

『I'll leave the battle against you for later. If the citizens are going against the military, I'll burn the city as a lesson. It looks like there is also still Resistance members remaining outside. I have to do my job now.』

『Don't mess around! You want to harm even more unrelated people than this!?』

『Ahaa. I wonder what are you sayiing. —Everything is because of your fault

right? Even though you aren't even someone from this country, you are poking your nose as you please here.]

『——』

Cold sweat trickled along Lux's back after hearing that shuddering whisper of the devil.

『It's because a hypocrite like you are provoking me, that the situation became like this right? This is because you are trying to defeat me with a half-baked resolve.】

Rosa was chuckling while going outside the rampart.

Right after that, screams could be heard. It seemed that there was a Resistance force outside that was trying to get in.

At this rate, his few allies in Heiburg would be exterminated thoroughly.

『Shit-!? Why! Why is something like this—』

Lux drew out the Sword Device of Bahamut with shaking hands and summoned the huge dragon before him.

He quickly equipped the armor and glared at the other side of the rampart where Rosa vanished into.

『Lu-chan, be careful, Rosa might be luring you into a trap.....』

Philuffy calmly pointed out despite the slight hitch in her voice from the tension.

Lux had also noticed that in his heart.

Rosa had an intention for going out of the practice ground that was surrounded by a rampart.

She wasn't just planning to exterminate the Resistance, she was also planning to make the situation advantageous for her.

(No, her aim isn't just that. No matter what happens, we cannot let Rosa get away here!)

Lux saw through Rosa's intention and he shuddered.

Their current position at the surface was wrongdoers who trespassed illegally into the country as well as breaking into a military facility without permission.

Although the majority of Heiburg's military was in the New Kingdom in order to conquer Babel, as expected there would still be Drag-Knights remaining to guard the capital. If they reported this to the world alliance, it would be Lux who would be considered as a traitor.

He had no proof of Heiburg's transaction with Dragon Marauder, on top of that now he was forced to chase after Rosa even understanding that it was her trap.

If he let her get away here, it would be his loss.

「Phi-chan, we are going!」

They had no leeway to look after the injured Resistance members.

Lux crossed over the rampart and flew in pursuit of Rosa.

Then, the smell of burning and smoke pierced his nose from the direction of the city's center.

「—!?」

Different from the Resistance members who were injured at the practice ground, the Resistance members here were killed.

Not a single one survived. There was even a girl who got half of her body blown away and died.

「Shit-!」

『You aren't a big deal aren't youu, hero-sama. Can't you protect even a single innocent citizen I wondeer?』

A provocation was sent through Dragon Voice from Rosa who was far away, heading to the south of the city.

It appeared that she had advanced until very far. Her figure couldn't be seen from far away.

Lux's body was getting heated, but he couldn't let himself to get driven by rage here.

He didn't know what kind of trap Rosa was setting up, that was why he had to pursue her carefully.

But—even so, Lux's heart was greatly stirred up.

He wondered if he had made some kind of mistake, whether there was anything he could do before it became like this.

「Lu-chan, found her.」

The voice of Philuffy who was skating on the street caused Lux to come back to his senses and he directed his gaze there.

The central national plaza of the capital, Hidehelm.

There was a residential district around it. Rosa was standing on a spacious round stage that was surrounded by eight huge metal statues.

Gorynych that had returned to Normal Mode was already readying a complete battle preparation.

Inside its armored arm, there was a girl who seemed to be a citizen within its grip.

「Why are you doing something like this!? Are you planning to lay your hand on the people of your own country even more than this!?」

Lux yelled in anger—but, in response Rosa sneered.

「I'm only punishing the traitors that are disturbing the country. Do you have any problems with iiit?」

「Just release the girl!」

「Thiiis is why a kid who won't listen is troubling. Even after accompanying me carelessly until this far, you still haven't understand your own position—」

Rosa made a shuddering smile where malice and joy mixed into one.

「I'm the one giving orders here, and isn't it you who should throw away your weapon? If you get it then come on. Quickly obey me. Or else—give up on this girl. That's what you'll do riiight? After all you will treasure yourself more.」

「Kuh.....!」

「Lu-chan. Presences are gathering from the surroundings. Drag-Ride noises. A lot of them.」

「Oops, I forgot to say though. Naturally I'm gathering soldiers from the surroundings using Dragon Voice. There are still Drag-Knights that will also come if gathered from this city. Won't you wait until you get completely surrounded?」

Rosa taking position in the central national plaza was in order to make Lux and Philuffy to consider the surrounding houses so they would hesitate to attack at full power.

In addition this location also possessed the space where Rosa would be able to use her own strength as she pleased with a lot of covers available for her.

And the clincher was her scheme of massing the reinforcement that she called to her.

「So even the Black Hero is only this much? I wonder why people are all so eager to act hypocritical. Nothing is more important than yourself, other people don't matter at all. Even though a human's true nature is evil, everyone is living while hiding that. Even though in the end you are nothing more than birds of a feather with me, like how you are abandoning this girl—」

「Shut up! I, I'm just.....」

Even while shaking from anger, Lux was gradually approaching Rosa bit by bit.

「—You ran out of time. Then I'll execute this girl, sayonara.」

Rosa swung her scythe and slashed it down towards the girl.

Instantly, Lux's Bahamut that was awaiting for the opportunity until now flashed red and attacked with explosive speed.

「Reload on Fire!」

「—!?」

He predicted Rosa's movement and unleashed the Divine Raiment of compression and strengthening.

Usually he used it when the enemy was within the range in order to cut the

opponent down instantly using Quick Shot. Now Lux purposefully activated it early in order to save the hostage.

At the same time he brandished his great sword and aimed at the armored arm of Rosa that was swinging up the Scythe.

The great sword where Lux focused all his energy into splendidly slashed Gorynych's arm.

「Philuffy!」

He took the hostage while entrusting her to Philuffy at the same time.

In a flash, Lux cut Gorynych's torso with a returning slash.

「Ku, Aah!?」

The barrier was torn and the armor smashed.

The fragments were scattered into the wind and rain, floating in the air in pieces.

Lux's Blade splendidly dug into the armor and it was bisected together with Rosa's scream.

「—Wha-!?」

But, Lux felt a strange feedback from the slash and a shudder ran through him.

Even though he slashed without the intent to kill, why—was the enemy destroyed so badly like this?

Right after his focus was absorbed into that puzzle for a moment, Rosa was already moving.

- Zakuri* The strange sound of flesh getting cut could be heard.

From the back of Philuffy who was watching for a chance far behind Lux in order to back him up, there was Rosa slashing with her Scythe.

The time was flowing slowly. Fresh blood was spurting high to the air from the back of his childhood friend.

The world stopped as though all color was erased from his sight.

「.....Lu, chan」

Typhon's armor was dispelled from Philuffy who had her back deeply slashed. She crumbled down.

「Philu, ffy.....?」

Lux turned around and muttered in a daze.

For Philuffy who originally should be able to take a lot of punishment to collapse like that, it appeared that she was pierced from a spot at her back that wasn't covered with armor. It was a lethal wound without a doubt.

Heiburg's remaining battle force was already gathering at the surrounding.

The figure of the girl who was taken hostage by Rosa vanished. She was gone completely.

「Seee? The evil side is stronger right? Sin Phantom—the special armament that I have can produce illusions including my own body double. Have you forgotten it after so long I wonder?」

By putting the illusion of Rosa riding on the unmanned Twelve Vice, she could produce a body double.

No, the tactic of creating a clone of Rosa that couldn't be seen through until it was destroyed.

Certainly he once got tricked by that at the skill exhibition battle previously.

And yet, there was a reason why Lux and Philuffy got so easily deceived.

Seeing the illusive hostage that was also made by Sin Phantom having blade pointed at it, it showed Lux a situation where he had to save the hostage in a hurry, lowering his guard.

And then, the Drag-Knights that were hiding within this rain and darkness while surrounding this plaza.

Philuffy was standing on guard against them in order to protect Lux from long range sniping. Rosa took her by surprise with her attention diverted like that.

It wasn't that they were careless.

It was Rosa's cunning trick that laid out multiple traps on top of each other ingeniously.

The result of the tactics that allowed every kind of evil surpassed Lux.

「—Surrender now. I will let you all to stay alive for now. With this, the New Kingdom will be driven to the wall as a traitor within the alliance. I'll release the Ragnarok from Babel and direct it towards the bunch that had gathered there.」

「Why, you.....」

Expression vanished from the dumbfounded Lux.

His emotion was rapidly cooling down as though assimilating into the cold rain.

「Why are you—doing something like this? Why are you hurting innocent people? How can something like this be necessary—?」

Rosa loudly laughed in ridicule seeing his standing figure that was filled with hollowness.

「What a troubling child. After coming to spy on someone else's country, now you are complaining when you failed? It became like this because you are tried to save another country's people with a half-baked feeling. In the end, this is the most that the power of good can achieve.」

There was a throbbing pain inside his head.

The figure of Philuffy lying down on the stone paving of the plaza overlapped with the scene of that time.

With the scene in the underground laboratory of Ries Island—what was done to that girl there.

(.....Was I, mistaken?)

His consciousness was in chaos.

When Philuffy was killed and he lost his self.

There the same scene was definitely replayed once more.

(It's the same as that time? What am I thinking.....? What am I saying? No, right now isn't the time—)

Rosa spoke even more words as though to take advantage of Lux's dazed state.

「Seee, you aren't thinking of saving this country or anything. 'I won't abandon anyone even if they are an enemy'. That's only you wanting to protect yourself so you can think you are a good person. Like that, you won't be able to win against me who carried evil to the extreme. Now, let's bring down the curtain. I'll take care of the other three girls too after this. Aah, riight—it's also fine even if I turn that Abyss monster over there into a guinea pig riight? In order to effectively use the Elixir that I obtained.....」

「——」

Guinea pig.

The instant Lux heard those words, the restraints inside himself came off.

A part of the memory that he didn't remember was flowing in. He grasped Bahamut's Sword Device tightly once more.

「Stop it already! Rosa!」

The silence was suddenly torn apart. A voice resounded through the central national plaza.

Looking there, a single girl slipped through the gap of the gathered Drag-Knights and approached.

Stefa Hersmice.

The blind girl who was a former military cadet who asked for Lux's help.

Her existence who knew about Rosa and Callesia in the past was.....

「Ste, fa.....? Wh, y」

The complexion of Rosa who held faith in absolute evil and committed tyranny changed slightly.

At that moment, the Drag-Knights of Heiburg's military hurriedly caught Stefa's hand.

「Remove the citizen! It's fine even if you are a little rough!」

「Rosa! Please! You can hear me right!? Please, no more, something like

this.....」

Rosa stiffened at the desperate pleading of the girl.

But, she immediately wore back her former wicked expression and quickly lifted her hand and gave instruction.

「Remove her from here. Don't let the citizen get in the way. Also, collect that New Kingdom girl too—」

「.....I won't let you.」

「.....?」

Rosa reacted to the dark voice that slipped out from Lux's mouth.

Almost at the same time, countless windows of light floated around Bahamut.

「Singlen's tuning application—the Battle Array is it? How foolish. You are still going to struggle in vain this late in the game?-!？」

She was about to sneer, but in the middle Rosa frowned in confusion.

The windows of light were gathering speed in repeatedly appearing and then immediately closing and vanishing.

Bahamut's Sword Device was emitting intense light as though resonating with it, and finally it happened.

「This is— don't tell me!」

「I won't, hand over Philuffy to you all.」

Particles of light were gathering in high speed around Lux, forming a new supplemental armor.

「Over Limit – On」

Each frame split, back wings, both arms, both legs, head part, and then even the great sword were covered with solid plate and transfigured.

The variable frame turned pointed sharply, enlarged, and shifted into a fiendish shape.

「Wha—!？」

Lux skated in the air towards the Drag-Knights—the soldiers of Heiburg

surrounding the area that numbered around fifty.

Transforming into an arrow that pierced through the air, he attacked in order to exterminate the enemies before him.

Part 4

「What is the meaning of this!? What is happening.....!?」

Sharis was murmuring in amazement in the air above the central national plaza where the deathly battle was unfolding, above the bell tower where one could look over the city.

The Triad who were devoting themselves to the role of messengers this time had intended to arrive in time to join the battle outside, but midway they noticed Heiburg's soldiers waiting in ambush and took a roundabout way. Because of that they were late to link up with Lux and Philuffy.

After that, when they arrived in the military's practice ground, they heard sounds from afar and followed the source, but—

『Yes. This is impossible to understand. Lady Rosa who should be at Triport in the New Kingdom, is here right now for some reason. She seems to be battling Lux-san.』

Noct who was hiding behind a building's cover was talking to the other members using Dragon Voice. Sharis immediately nodded in response.

『Yeah, it's hard to believe but this is the reality. What's more, missy Philuffy seems to be hideously injured. We have to rescue her when there is an opening—』

『Rather, Lux-chi is also in trouble there! That's, could it be Over Limit.....?』

Tillfur who was also similarly hiding behind a building's cover was pointing out with an anxious voice.

The hidden form where all the Drag-Ride's limiter devices were cancelled so the Drag-Ride could display its maximum output while ignoring the burden to the pilot's body.

After using that, Lux also wouldn't be able to fight for long, but something

was strange.

It was a form that was used when defeating Yggdrasil, but it should be limited only to that one time.

Since then, Lux himself also said that he couldn't remember the procedure to release it.

Rosa's presence, Philuffy's wound, and then Lux's complete change.

The situation was unexpected in every aspect, but they had to do something about it.

『We are waiting for a chance..... We cannot move yet.』

Letting out a white breath, Sharis was giving instructions as the leader even while her hands were shaking from nervousness.

『Failure won't be permitted in this situation. I'll assign a role to each of you, don't move into action until I give the signal!』

『Yes. Acknowledged.』

『Sharis too, be careful!』

Noct and Tillfur also nodded and waited for an opening where they could cut in.

Even when Lux was using Over Limit, the battle situation was one where he was surrounded by a total of fifty enemy Drag-Knights and Rosa. He was in an overwhelming disadvantage.

Even if it was Lux, he wouldn't be able to break through this easily.

In the next moment, that prediction of the Triad—was overturned.

Episode 4 – The Steel Witch

Part 1

「Ki, kill! One hostage is enough! Attack him with the intent to ki—guah!?!」

An officer of Heiburg's military who was managing the gathered force let out his voice. But right at that instant, a great sword cut up his shoulder.

The Force Core there that was the vital part of a Drag-Ride was smashed. The commander immediately fell to the ground.

「Wha-.....!？」

The commander other than Rosa was finished off at the very beginning. The remaining troops became agitated.

Lux didn't miss that opening and swung his great sword, instantly cutting down two Drag-Knights who were around Philuffy.

Their shoulder armor was smashed up and the Blades in their hands danced in the air.

「Fi, fire-! Stop him in his tracks using a barrage of Breath Gun!」

「No wait!? That guy's surroundings—!？」

Around Lux who was driving Bahamut, the weapons of the defeated enemies—multiple Daggers and Blades were floating.

The moment Heiburg troops were perplexed, those weapons were fired to all directions with speed like a bullet.

「—Linker Burst」

The special armament that was loaded inside Bahamut.

Normally it was a weak ability that could only do things like forming a force field to change the trajectory of things or pulling things closer towards the user's hands, but, Over Limit strengthened the ability until a level that boasted strength which could throw objects at high speed.

Heiburg's troops that became the side that was suppressed with a barrage instead broke their formation. Lux charged using that opening.

「Hmmpf. Over Limit eeeh..... It seems that it's quite something but—I wondeer, how long will you be able to keep up that output?」

On the other hand, while the extermination of her subordinates was gathering speed, Rosa was forming the tactic for after this.

Rosa had also obtained the information about Over Limit itself.

It was a double-edged sword that realized the multiplication of a Drag-Ride's output by several times by taking off the limiter that was usually restricting the output of the Drag-Ride to avoid burden to the user.

In that case, it was convenient if Lux was spending strength to defeat her subordinates.

That full power wouldn't continue for long.

The normal option to take here was to wait until the opponent ran out of breath and his Drag-Ride got dispelled from that, but she had to implement the best plan for that to happen.

『—Informing all troops. Bring down Lux Arcadia. Don't be scared, the guy's strength won't last long.』

Rosa gave her subordinates instructions once more through Dragon Voice. At the same time, she herself also deployed bait.

She used the Twelve Vice that manipulated unmanned Drag-Rides together with the illusion ability of Sin Phantom, producing unmanned drones that acted as her body doubles.

She made her doubles to assault the back of Lux who was crushing his enemies using overwhelming firepower—but, at that instant the drone was cut

apart into pieces.

「.....-!？」

Quick Shot—more than ten consecutive slashes using the application of time acceleration from Bahamut's Divine Raiment.

The Drag-Ride's four limbs, back wings, head part, and then even its Force Core, the drone was destroyed to the limit until it was impossible to regenerate using its own strength.

「So its weak point is seen through already eeh.....」

Expression vanished for the first time from the face of Rosa who saw that. Faint anxiety and graveness tinged her voice.

Gorynych's Divine Raiment, Tartaros Frame, it was an ability to disassemble Drag-Rides and rearrange them.

In other words, even if a Drag-Ride was destroyed, this Divine Raiment possessed the feature to reconstruct it to a certain degree.

But, if even the Force Core that functioned to power up the Drag-Ride was also destroyed, the Drag-Ride wouldn't be able to receive orders and it became impossible to reconstruct and repair it in the middle of battle.

「—However, I wonder how long that strength can continue?」

But, even though she was standing at a disadvantage, Rosa was composed.

In the state of Over Limit, a Drag-Ride's functions would be reinforced drastically in all aspects, but the backlash from that was also great.

Although the compression strengthening of Reload on Fire was also ascended until more than ten times, if Lux used it consecutively his limit would arrive soon.

No, if he used his Divine Raiment two more times, he would surely self-destruct immediately.

That prediction was correct, but mistaken.

「Ru, RUUUuUUUUNN! THERE IS NO WAY WE CAN WIN AGAINST A MONSTER LIKE THIS!」

「WE ARE GOING TO GET KILLED, RETREAT! RETREAT!」

The battle force of fifty Drag-Rides was reduced to half in less than ten-odd seconds. Even Rosa's doubles were carved apart into pieces.

The remaining Drag-Knight troops who witnessed that result began to run away like baby spiders scattering away.

For a moment Rosa was dumbfounded, not comprehending what had happened.

But, she immediately showed a wicked expression and scolded her subordinates.

「Looks like my education is insufficient eeh. Running away in front of the enemy is a sin heavier than capital crime you know? If it's now I'll still be—」

「Who cares! We are going to get killed before that!」

「It's impossible already, even you aren't a match for him see!? I'll escape until outside the country!」

「Wha—!?」

Even so her subordinates didn't stop and continued to escape. Seeing that, Rosa was shaking in agitation.

Seeing the good chance, the Triad landed down on the central plaza and Sharis called out in panic.

「Lux-kun! Sorry we are late! We will take care of missy Philuffy and missy Stefa. You go defeat Lady Rosa! I'll go take a look at missy Callesia's situation, after that we will reinforce you!」

「Yes. Please leave this side to us.」

「Lux-chi, be careful!」

Next Noct and Tillfur quickly rushed in. Noct lifted up Philuffy while Tillfur carried Stefa. They then retreated from that place.

「—Please.」

Lux shortly replied, at the same time he skated Bahamut in the air and slashed at Rosa.

Quick Draw—the attack cut off the shoulder of the arm that was holding the Scythe and instantly destroyed the Force Core there.

If it was with the super output of Over Limit, even though it was a slash that was specialized for speed, it still could cut through the thick barrier and armor.

But, the figure of the pilot Rosa vanished at the same time when she was cut like it was only natural.

It was an unmanned drone created by Sin Phantom that worked as Rosa's body double but—the remaining drones were eight.

Lux was reducing the number with certainty and cornering his opponent.

「—Those useless, dimwitted subordinates. It seems that the fear I gave those bunches were too lukewarm.」

「You're mistaken, Lady Rosa.」

Lux was destroying even more of Rosa's double that was attacking him while correcting her.

His voice was cold and monotone.

Pierced by that eye glint that consisted of only hostility that was condensed and sharpened to the extreme, Rosa's voice shook slightly.

「I wondeer, what do you mean?」

「It's because you are ruling over them with only fear. Humans can be made to obey easily if one uses fear—but at the same time, if just one prerequisite collapses, the strength of that authority will also crumble.」

「——That scene of destruction with your full power, you are saying you did that intentionally?」

In exchange of an answer, Lux smashed another drone that was rode by Rosa's double once more.

Just now, Lux displayed an overwhelming difference in firepower without showing any opening that could be taken advantage of.

Even though there was still the troops' ruler, Rosa, who was still waiting in reserve, why did Lux unleash his full power when he merely faced the

subordinates and body doubles?

He intentionally made the great strength from Over Limit to be in full display before their eyes and unnerved the enemies' fighting spirit.

Even though if all of them bought time then they might have been able to make Lux's stamina run out, but by showing them a difference in power that was too great, the subordinates were cornered to escape.

「Yeah. And then it's over—I won't forgive you anymore.」

When Lux continued to cut down the sixth drones, he declared coldly.

But, Rosa who should be cornered even further grinned fearlessly.

「Is that so? Then it can't be helped. I'll also stop trying to capture you alive.」

「.....!？」

The veil of rain and wind that was hitting the body inside the darkness.

When it weakened for a moment, he could see Rosa's figure that was wrapped inside a giant armor.

Over there, existed a strange shape that was completely different from until just now.

「So you made your comrades into bait and formed that.」

A giant dragon walking on two legs, with a size that might be ten times larger than a normal Drag-Ride.

That form used the real Gorynych as the base where its whole armor was strengthened.

Not to mention the chest part, the two legs, two arms, the propulsion device, all of them were increased in thickness due to the combination.

Gorynych's special armament—the unmanned drones of the Twelve Vice should have been destroyed until a state where it was impossible to regenerate, that was why no matter how Gorynych's main frame combined with the Twelve Vice, this size didn't match the calculation.

In other words—.

「Thaat's right. My Tartaros Frame can disassemble even the armor of general purpose Drag-Rides and reconstruct it into my own armor. Those useless subordinates, at the very least they should become nourishment for me, don't you think sooo?」

Rosa who recovered her composure grinned and looked down on Lux.

She didn't summon her subordinates here just for attacking from all directions and to exhaust Lux.

It was for her trump card where in the end she would incorporate the leftover armors and strengthen herself like this.

「Tartaros Frame – ^{Combined God Form} Devil Machia Mode. I'll fight and let you die a noble death fitting for a hero. Of course, after you die— you will be treated as a traitor though!」 Immediately after that, several wheels that came out from Gorynych's armored legs rotated with terrific power—and accelerated.

That giant armor that had increased in volume by more than ten times kicked out to the front and charged with an explosive speed.

「U—OOOOOHOH！」

Lux swung Bahamut's Chaos Brand with full power in the stance of facing it head on.

He slashed with a counter to cut Gorynych's fist that was like a huge rock, but when his sword hit, a shockwave with terrible impact pushed him at the same time and Lux was blown backward.

「Gu, ah.....!?」

「How fooliiish. Only an idiot would put on an air like a hero.」

On the other hand, Rosa wasn't shaken at all. She attacked further with all out bombing using the Cannons that were installed on her whole armor.

Lux dodged the storm of countless flashes that were flying around while taking distance in order to rally himself.

The power output of Gorynych that had entered Devil Machia Mode was almost equal with Over Limit.

But, Lux was one-sidedly pushed back because of the influence of the weight difference that was more than ten times over.

Especially because Gorynych was a land battle type, when they hit each other directly while stopping in place, the difference in stability between both sides was remarkable.

But, even after understanding that he was at disadvantage, there was no way Lux could relax his offense here.

Lux changed his trajectory once more and skated in the air—he swung down his great sword while putting his weight in it.

But, it was deflected without difficulty by the thick armor and multiple barriers.

Even though they were both using Drag-Rides with high power output, there was a clear difference in their reserve energy. Lux realized Rosa's trick.

「This too—is within your calculation since the start?」

Rosa wasn't as exhausted as Lux surely because in the middle she received support from her subordinates' Drakes.

The special equipment type Drake could transfer one's own energy to the other party.

In other words, right after the reinforcement came, Rosa received strength of several people portions from them.

On the other hand, Lux's body that had been worked too hard until now was nearing its limit.

Surely he would run out of strength and his armor dispelled in less than two minutes because he couldn't endure the burden.

If that happened, everything would be over.

Whether it was the New Kingdom after Babel was conquered, and also Philuffy who was lethally wounded, and also the Triad who came here.

「It's unfortunate buut—it seems this is as far as you go. As I thought, good cannot triumph against evil. No matter how much you try to stand against me

with the correct path, this is your limit. You don't have both the sense and ability to dirty your hands with evil. You are just spouting the nonsense of the loser and the weak.]

Rosa continued as though making a proclamation within the strong rain hitting their body.

On the other hand Lux wielded his great sword and earnestly searched for the clue to break through this situation.

But, no matter from which direction he attacked, he couldn't break that tough barrier and armor.

「At that time it was also raining like this I thiink. When I killed father—」

「.....!？」

Rosa murmured as though talking to herself. It was unclear whether she did that because she intended to act composed, or that her emotion was highly strung.

「With the death of the Dark Marketeer Hayes, the military commander also lost his standing. It was the long-awaited chance for the Granhide family to take over the military, so I too had to work hard, riight.....」

「You, killed him?」

Lux asked with a stifled voice.

Rosa's lips loosened in ecstasy and she talked in nostalgia.

「It was fuun. When that man who swaggered as a great noble and tried to discipline me was shedding blood in an unsightly state and then stopped breathing—. Of course, the crime was treated as the work of a thief who sneaked inside. With that I was convinced. In the end no one can notice the truth. Even if they stay alive, the likes of sheep will only get preyed on. Those who can skillfully use evil is the strongest.」

Rosa also moved into offense, as though she was drunk on her own creed.

The huge arm that pulverized the stone paving with one attack was striking towards Bahamut.

「Kuh!?」

Lux neutralized the punch with a counter, but a fierce impact exploded in reaction.

「With this strength I will start by stealing Babel and the New Kingdom. I'll also subdue the Seven Dragon Paladins. After arriving at Avalon, I will stand on even further heights with the power there. Not just the current tiny Heiburg, I will put everything in this world under my rule!」

All the Cannon muzzles protruding out from Gorynych's whole frame were tinged with light and they fired consecutively.

Lux barely dodged by using his Blade as a shield. He glared at Rosa.

「Like that, you intend to rule over someone with fear again? In order to do that, you intend to hurt those who stand in your way!? The same like that era of the empire that I lived in—」

Rosa only laughed even against Lux's objection that was filled with intimidation.

「Sayonaraa, you sore loser who pretends to be a hero. Nothing can be changed with your belief. You cannot protect anything. Accept your defeat and die.」

Rosa grinned with a belittling look.

The moment Lux saw that, the inner part of Lux's eyes was tinged with heat as though it got burned.

—

『No matter how much resolve you tried to have, you believe that 「country」 and 「people」 are something precious. That was why you could speak of a pipe dream like keeping these bunches alive and making a place of dialogue.』

—

Those were the words of Lux's elder brother—Fugil who massacred the imperial family and the nobility, betraying Lux who was trying to save even the people of the Old Empire, as many as possible, and make a place to talk with each other.

Those words were replayed at the back of his mind, which turned into a violent emotion that burned his heart.

That's right—there is no other choice but to do it.

(She is the same like his majesty the emperor and Hayes—an evil beyond salvation that has to be killed. I can only kill her here!)

Lux resolved his will, at the same time he deduced the best plan with his remaining stamina.

Even after he was using Over Limit, this Rosa was a formidable enemy.

But, no matter how strong of an existence it was, he was learning the way to break the opposition.

When the armor of Bahamut that was already starting to creak was distorting even more conspicuously, he moved.

「A rampage—, is it? That's finee. I'll scatter apart that flower petals faster than you can ruin yourself disgracefully!」

Rosa flashed a wicked smile and pulled back the fist of the Devil Machia Mode. She unleashed an attack that was like a battering ram.

Matching his timing with that, Lux also unleashed the power he stored.

「Recoil Burst-.....!」

「—Wha-!?」

Body control operation and mind control operation, the command to suppress and the command to unleash.

By executing two kinds of simultaneous control operation that ran counter to each other, it suppressed the starting point of the attack and gathered strength until the limit.

One of Lux's hidden techniques that produced destructive power more than ten times normal directly hit Gorynch's Devil Machia Mode.

With the fist of the enemy that came into contact as the starting point, the might of his attack was transmitted in chain towards the armored arm's wrist, elbow, and then shoulder. That armor that bundled more than ten Drag-Rides

together cracked and burst open.

「Impossible, don't tell me—!？」

Rosa's both eyes snapped open in shock and she trembled.

The tables were turned in one move.

If there was someone who watched this battle, they would imagine the scene that would unfold next, but immediately after that—

「.....Juust joking.」

The Steel Witch grinned as though everything went as she planned.

The Devil Machia Mode that should be pulverized into pieces with one attack.

But, the chain of destruction didn't reach until the very armor of Gorynych's main frame. It was still unharmed.

And then, the armor part that should be broken just now was getting reconstructed once more.

「You intentionally disassembled the armor ahead to disperse the impact—is that what you did?」

「You can feel proud. This Devil Machia Mode is tuned to destruct its outer shell automatically when it received a fatal impact to a certain degree. If the attack's power is dispersed to the many armors covering it, the force that Gorynych's main body receives will drop sharply.」

It was an attack of full power from Lux's Over Limit and his hidden technique of Drag-Ride control.

Rosa even dealt against a special move that she should have seen for the first time and cornered Lux.

Rosa treated evil as right and she was convinced of that as the proof of ability, but she had also investigated thoroughly his strength as a Drag-Knight.

Therefore, in the exchange of tactics just now, she should be the one who came out ahead slightly—but.

「-.....!? What is this? My body—cannot move!？」

「Reload on Fire—the moment you disassembled your own armor, I put the compression strengthening of time on Gorynych.」

Reload on fire compressed the phenomenon of five seconds ahead which caused the strength to decrease sharply until a fragment of the original, and then that strength was unleashed in the next five seconds.

The Divine Raiment that was strengthened by Over Limit caused the amplitude of the strengthening to be increased until more than ten times, causing the strength to swell up abnormally.

Rosa was also being vigilant against that, but she didn't think that the Divine Raiment would be applied to hers rather than to Lux himself.

The time of Gorynych's whole body including Rosa was decelerated. The disassembled armor didn't return back to normal.

Lux didn't overlook that opening when the armor was disconnected and slashed.

「—End Action」

After applying a full power Reload on Fire on Rosa and her movement stopped, Lux's Blade struck from above her barrier. Hundreds of consecutive attacks without a single moment of pause, that came from the application of stacking up two kinds of control operations repeatedly, were driving into Gorynych's armor.

「Hahh! No matter how many times you pile up such light slashes, you won't be able to break my Divine Drag-Ride!」

Currently no matter how many times Gorynych was hit by Lux's attacks, its barrier wasn't reduced.

But, Rosa didn't notice that she was already checkmated.

「It's over already for you, Lady Rosa.」

Lux indifferently told the fearlessly grinning Rosa.

One of three hidden techniques, End Action was finished in just four seconds. Lux hovered in the air while breathing hard.

「Your Drag-Ride isn't receiving damage because of Reload on Fire's effect that sharply decreased the flow of time.」

In other words, the impact of a hundred consecutive attacks until now that was concentrated onto just a single point, all of that attack power would flood in all at once.

「.....-!？」

Rosa noticed that fact and her expression distorted in despair. The effect of Reload on Fire arrived at the five seconds of the later half.

「—N, OoOoOOOOoOOOOoOOOOO-！」

A shriek.

Rosa was sent flying along with Gorynych backward. She vanished from Lux's sight in a speed that the human eye couldn't follow.

At the same time, the parts of more than ten Drag-Rides that were severed from Tartaros Frame's control were all scattered around on her trajectory.

「Haa, haa....., guh.....aaa！」

Bahamut in Over Limit state was dispelled. Lux was standing still for a while on that spot.

The muscle joints of his whole body immediately felt pained. He was feeling a fever as though his whole body was burned.

The cold rain robbed his very little remaining stamina. A temptation to just faint like this assaulted him.

「Not, yet.....！」

But, Lux pulled out the Sword Device of Wyvern and used it to stab his thigh. He awakened his consciousness with pain.

Rosa's combat potential should have been neutralized already with an almost certainty, but she mustn't be allowed to get away from here.

He more or less calculated the direction where he sent Rosa flying. He aimed at the first place—the military practice ground beside the underground market.

He mustn't collapse yet until he caught up and restrained her.

「U, guh.....!？」

Lux coughed heavily. When his hand pressed on his mouth, blood got stuck on his palm. It made him feel an intense exhaustion.

It was a paper thin victory.

The multiple layers of piled up evil tactics that made use of every method effectively.

And it didn't stop there, she had also accumulated diligent training that surpassed the common sense as a Drag-Knight.

It was just as rumored and similar to the other Seven Dragon Paladins, Rosa boasted a true strength that was worthy of the name of Steel Witch and wicked cunning that made it possible for her to grasp Heiburg within her palm.

If Lux didn't use Over Limit within his muddy memory, he would be the one defeated without a doubt.

(How did I, become able to use Over Limit again? No, actually, from where did I know about the method to release Over Limit?)

If he knew the method, then why? Why did he become unable to remember it?

Lux harbored even more doubt, but he shook his head and erased the feeling.

「Right now isn't the time.....! If I don't, defeat, Lady Rosa.....cough-！」

He took deep breath many times, but his breathing wouldn't calm down.

Also, he couldn't even summon Wyvern right now.

「If I don't defeat Rosa, if she gets away from here, everything— Philuffy, Stefa-san, the people of this country too, everyone will—」

When Lux was about to fall on that spot, the arm of a Drag-Ride firmly caught him.

Lux was taken aback and held his breath. In front of him, there was a familiar girl.

「You are.....?」

Under the heavy rain, a girl with peculiar braided hairstyle was riding a Drag-Ride.

But, he had seen that androgynous look before.

「-.....!？」

A pain ran behind Lux's eyes sharply, his field of vision was obstructed by a sandstorm.

The obstruction vanished instantly. When his consciousness became clear, Lux realized who the boy before him was.

The one who supported the collapsing Lux while wearing an EX Wyvern was Coral.

「I'm sorry I'm late, Lux-kun. I was in communication with everyone of the Triad through Dragon Voice, they are all safe. Philuffy-san too, it looks like she is heavily injured, but I was told that her life isn't in danger.」

「That's, great.....」

His breathing was weak and frail, even so Lux made a relieved smile.

「I received a special mission from the Vanheim Principality and came here to chase after Vine of Dragon Marauder in the underground market, but he got away. I caught them in the act, so I could send evidence to the world alliance. But right now your condition is the concern. We should also retreat for the moment.」

「Not, yet. If we don't finish off Lady Rosa, this country will—」

「It's better to not force yourself. You cannot use a Drag-Ride anymore. If I let you die here, I won't have any face to meet your comrades.」

「I'm fine, that's why we have to pursue Lady Rosa here—. If it's just a Wyvern, I'll be able to use it after resting for a bit more.」

「.....I get it.」

Coral sighed. Even so he obeyed Lux's instruction.

He lifted Lux with his EX Wyvern. Then he faced the enemy's stronghold that was already crumbling.

He flew towards the military practice ground where Rosa Granhide appeared to be blown away to.

Part 2

「Gefuh, gopuh..... Ue」

On the other hand, Rosa who got the flow of her time sharply decreased by Reload on Fire and then struck by concentrated slashes from End Action onto one spot during that time, she crashed into the practice ground just as Lux predicted. She vomited out a lot of blood and writhed on the ground.

Fortunately because the direction she was sent flying at was a forest, the trees became a cushion and she avoided the fate of instant death, but not just the armor of her Divine Drag-Ride, even her limbs and ribcage were broken. She was on the verge of death.

「.....Why, how? This, shouldn't happen..... For me who carries out evil to the extreme to be defeated, such, thing—」

Rosa twisted her body with gasping breath while her blood soaked body was trembling.

The rainy night reminded Rosa of her past.

In the night of that rainy day, the military man who was torturing her died.

The King of Vices killed him.

Everything should be over with that.

At that time she should have stood—on the side of the ruler.

And yet, how did she lose? No,

「It's still, noot over yet..... If I can escape from here, it'll be, my wiiin.....」

Rosa murmured to encourage herself and stood up.

She touched the Sword Device of a general purpose Drag-Ride that she covertly carried and started walking towards a military facility with staggering steps.

But, something had already broken.

Her expression, was becoming an expression that she had never shown until now. Even now it looked like she would break out crying.

Part 3

「It's around here I think? It looks like Rosa's Gorynych was dispelled here.」

Lux and Coral pursued Rosa and returned inside the practice ground in Heiburg's military's ground. They were looking at the broken trees of the forest while following behind the footprints.

「Thank you Coral. If it's from here, I can go alone.」

Even though he was wounded all over his body, it seemed Lux's breathing was calming down. He unsheathed the Sword Device of Wyvern once more and equipped the Drag-Ride on his body.

「Don't force yourself Lux-kun! If you like, you can also entrust the matter of Lady Rosa to me—」

「No, that's no good. If I don't settle it with her with my own hands.....」

Lux stepped inside the darkness with an expression that was afflicted with fever.

It was hard to understand because of the rain and the armor fragments of Gorynych that were scattered around, but some trace of blood could be seen.

Rosa too was also at a dying state without doubt.

But, she might have enough stamina remaining to escape.

If Noct also came here, she would be able to check the reaction of living things around with her Drake's probing device but—

「Be careful Lux-kun! —There is someone nearby!」

When Coral informed him with a stifled voice, Lux stopped his feet and put up his guard.

But, it seemed it wasn't Rosa, but half of Heiburg soldiers who escaped from the battle before this.

It appeared they were also at their limit already too. They weren't wearing Drag-Rides.

When they noticed Lux and Coral, they threw away their swords and prostrated.

「Ple, please spare us! We too had no other choice but to obey Lady Rosa. We are putting down our Sword Devices like this so—」

「I get it. Coral, please take care of them. I'm still searching for her so—」

「It's fine but, will you be alright by yourself? I just confirmed from the Dragon Voice, everyone of the Triad will come soon you know?」

「Yes. I can still, go on.」

Lux slowly flew forward, following the bloody footprints until behind a large rock.

「Throw away your weapon and surrender. If you do that I won't take away your life here.」

「.....」

Perhaps Rosa wasn't behind the rock, no reply came.

Lux readied his Scale Blade. It was at that moment he felt a presence behind him.

「—AAAAH!」

A hoarse voice burst. At the same time, Rosa clad in a Drake struck with her Blade.

But, that trick wouldn't work for the second time.

Although Lux was exhausted, as expected he had predicted the ambush.

「As I thought, you are going to do something like this.」

Lux performed a counter of Critical Hit using the Scale Blade. The Blade of the Drake was smashed.

Rosa who saw that backed away while her body was trembling fiercely.

Perhaps her arms and legs were respectively broken, her body was tilting to

the side.

From how she was covering the area around her stomach, it hinted that her ribs were also broken.

「Why, why doesn't it work.....! Even though it shouldn't be like this.....just whyyy!」

Her eyes were moist with tears of despair, even so she threw a Dagger towards Lux.

When Lux calmly used his Blade as a shield, Rosa used that chance to vanish her figure.

It was the basic ability of special equipment type Drake, the camouflage ability.

However, in her dying state, she wasn't able to use it properly.

Lux slashed at a spot where the air was distorted, breaking the waist part of the armor.

「Tsu.....! NOOoOOOO-！」

Rosa's armor was dispelled at the same time with her reappearance. She broke into a run deeper towards the forest with her flesh body.

「This is your loss, Rosa. Surrender obediently and accept the judgement of the law. Atone for your sins until now.」

「Why, why why why why..... Even though evil is absolute, even though I shouldn't have lost, even though I was told that I would win, why—！」

Rosa hugged her shoulders with an expression of heartbreak while shivering. Even so she didn't let go of her Sword Device.

In the middle of running her foot got caught in quagmire and she stumbled. Her whole body was soppy with blood and mud while at the end she fell on her butt and looked up to Lux's Wyvern.

She was at an open spot that was surrounded by trees. There Rosa was finally unable to move anymore.

「Please, help mee..... Forgive mee.....! I, don't want to dieee.....! I don't

want what's mine to get taken away by someone else anymore.....！」

Rosa leaked out tears down her cheeks that were soaked with blood while pleading.

Even that might be a trap.

Lux couldn't let his guard down until the end.

「Are you planning to trick someone again by acting like that? Or perhaps—」

Was she planning to buy time? When Lux was about to say that, footsteps could be heard approaching from the surrounding.

「——」

For a moment Lux was anxious thinking if enemy reinforcement was coming, but it seemed he was mistaken.

Common soldiers whose armors had been dispelled already were heading here while leading Coral.

「They had thrown away their weapons and surrendered just now. Lady Rosa, I want you too to be restrained quietly.」

Coral tried to persuade Rosa with a calm tone, but in contrast, when Rosa noticed him, she called out to her subordinates.

「Qu, quickly save me here! If you guys defeat them—! If you let me get away then a reward—」

「Shut up you bitch-!」

「KYAAAAH!?」

Rosa immediately shrieked. Her face was snapped backward.

One of the soldiers threw a rock that hit her forehead.

「Tha, that's right! Be quiet you trash! You villain!」

「We are getting treated like this! Everything is your fault!」

「How dare you threaten us all until now! How dare you, how dare you—」

The Heiburg soldiers who numbered more than twenty started hurling abuses at Rosa with that as the trigger.

They threw rocks, stepped on her broken limbs, ripped her remaining pilot suit, punched her face.

It seemed they were keeping a lot of grudge, or perhaps they were doing this only to protect their own positions.

Even though the girl was crying and screaming, the soldier's collective behavior didn't stop and increased in intensity instead.

「NOOOOO-.....! PLEASE FORGIVE MEEEE-! I'M SORRY I'M SORRY! STOP IT ALREADYYYYY! SAVE MEEEE-!」

The girl who had already lost her strength and became powerless was showered with insults and violence by the men.

That wretched sight that was just too painful to look at caused Lux to grimace unconsciously.

—It was her just deserts.

This was the payment for how she ruled this country harshly with strength and fear and carried out immoral actions.

Lux had no duty to stop them.

Besides even though she was weak right now, if she recovered her strength, she would undoubtedly stand up again as a follower of atrocity.

At that time, he wouldn't know if he would be able to outwit Rosa again.

「—!?」

But even so, Lux reached out his hand reflexively trying to stop the beating. It was at that timing he heard Callesia's voice through Dragon Voice.

『I beg you Lux-san—please kill her with your hand.』

Callesia's voice was tinged with urgency.

『Eh.....?』

Lux was bewildered by her words and he stiffened.

『My family is also taken hostage by her. Everyone is suffering by her tyranny.

I beg you. Please save us.】

『However, such thing.....!』

Even so Lux was showing hesitation, but Calensia whispered.

『Please Lux-san. Right now I still cannot go there. If she is imprisoned, surely she will escape and take revenge. I know that what I'm asking is unreasonable. But, please. I'm begging you, in order to save this country.』

Lux was listening to Calensia's pleading while gripping his Wyvern's Blade tightly.

-

『As a king, you tried to save not only the people of this country, but even the rotten imperial family and nobles too. That's why, you couldn't see through me, the evil that was going to steal from you and got outwitted.』

-

The words of Fugil that he said to Lux when the old empire was destroyed were replayed once more inside Lux's head.

(That's right. There is no way—I can do the same mistake like that time again.) The imperial family that was treated as the symbol of evil and also their retainers, if possible Lux also wanted to save them. He tried to save them.

However he was betrayed by his eldest brother Fugil and failed. Fugil thrust his own naivety before him.

Even now he couldn't see the answer, what was the most right. However—

「Please, kill this woman!」

「It's impossible for the people of our country! Anyone here will hesitate from fear of the Servants' revenge! Please kill her in our place!」

「If only this woman is killed, the King of Vices will also disappear! Peace will return to this country!」

The boos of the soldiers that sounded like a chorus strengthened. Lux's world

distorted and crumbled.

Having those gazes that were filled with expectation directed at him, Lux stood before Rosa with Blade in hand.

「Lux-kun.....you must not hurt this girl more than this! There are still things that we have to ask her!」

Coral who stood beside him stopped him like that, but Lux quietly lifted up the Blade.

「No, that's no good. After using Over Limit, I won't be able to move anymore once I run out of strength. If Lady Rosa escapes during that time, I won't be able to protect everyone.」

That's right.

This wasn't just about Lux.

Philuffy and also the Triad who were here too, then everyone in the New Kingdom too would get exposed to danger.

「Someone has to do this. I have to do this. There is no, other choice. If this girl won't stop no matter what, then, there is no choice—but this.」

Lux erased his feelings and stared at Rosa coldly.

And then he quietly lifted up his Blade, brandishing it towards the girl whose pupils were opened in fear.

「Please.....save me! Don't kill mee! It shouldn't be like thiiss..... I had no choice, but to do this.....! I'll do anything! I'm begging you, that's why.....!」

「—Then, I too have no choice but doing this. In order to stop you, this can't be helped.」

Lux told her with a blunt tone.

But, right after that Lux's heart throbbed violently, he was caught in the sensation as though his blood flow was flowing in reverse.

In the era of the Old Empire, on a rainy day the same as this, the figure of himself yelling for help in front of the coach that fell down the cliff was overlapping with the figure of Rosa right now.

Even though he was asking for help to save his heavily injured mother, what came back were only jeers and thrown stones.

Lux and his family who were the farthest from the throne succession rights weren't involved with the despotic administration of the Old Empire.

And then Lux and his family were banished from the imperial court at that time too was because his grandfather tried to remonstrate the emperor in order to save the people, but—the people didn't know anything about such circumstance.

They were only directing all the resentment they had piled up until then to Lux and his family who were weak imperial family members who were abandoned by the emperor.

「U, gu.....aa-!」

Nausea and dizziness assaulted Lux simultaneously. He felt like he was going crazy.

But, the voices of Heiburg's soldiers who were oppressed until now wouldn't stop ringing.

And then, Callesia too was also sending a heartfelt plea『Kill her』through the Dragon Voice.

While Coral was watching over Lux with an uneasy look, Lux was going to swing down the Blade unthinkingly, it was then—

—

「You, must not, Lu-chan.....」

—

A warm hand softly touched the leg of Lux who was wearing a pilot suit.

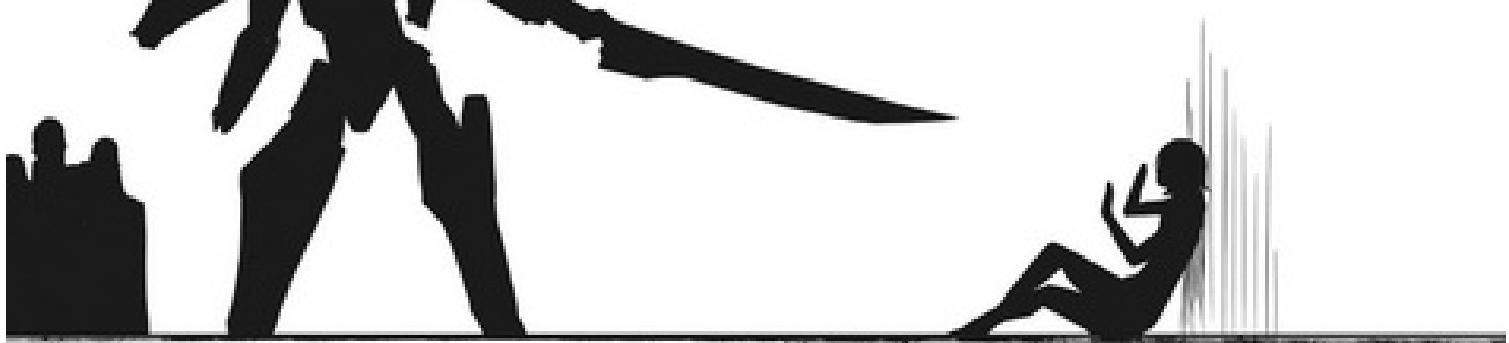
A dear and gentle voice caressed his ears. Lux instantly came back to his senses.

‘Kill, kill’, inside that hellish world where the chorus of Heiburg's soldiers who were wishing for Rosa's death penalty, only Philuffy tried to stop Lux by embracing him.

「Phi, chan.....!?」

Philuffy who was slashed by Rosa and should be grievously injured was rushing to Lux's side once again under the heavy rain with her body still wrapped in bandages.

「Wait for us missy Philuffy! Running with that injury is—!?」



The members of Triad starting with Sharis were coming from behind wearing their respective Drag-Rides.

The abnormal atmosphere until now was dispersed with that. Only the quiet sound of rain was hitting the eardrum.

「If it's my body, I'm all right. That's why, Lu-chan, you mustn't kill.」

「.....」

Philuffy's voice that was absentminded and at her own pace like usual.

Just from hearing that, tension left Lux's body.

His boiling killing intent and rage towards Rosa vanished, only the scene of this place entered his eyes.

And then Lux told the Triad.

「.....Please take care of her, Lady Rosa's apprehending. Also, about everyone's—」

Midway, the armor covering his body was dispelled and strength left Lux's body.

He had already passed his limit a long time ago.

After this, surely he wouldn't be able to move by his own strength for a while.

「Lux-kun-!？」

「Lux-chi!？」

「Lux-san!」

Lux listened to the anxious voices of the Triad while getting gently embraced within someone's arms.

It was a gentle and warm sensation that felt somewhat nostalgic.

Lux was feeling the warmth of his childhood friend Philuffy on his back while losing consciousness.

Part 4

「U, uu.....」

Lux lost consciousness. He got a fever due to the extreme exhaustion from the Over Limit's backlash.

A day passed since then. It was the time when his consciousness finally returned.

「Lu-chan. Are you okay?」

「Yes. I'm getting better, bit by bit.....I think I can go back to the New Kingdom tomorrow.....」

Although he tried to act strong, his body was still heavy and couldn't move.

Lux was tasting a delusion as though his whole body was deeply buried within clay.

It felt like his body became one with the bed. He couldn't move as though his body was plastered onto the bed.

The underground market was closed after that commotion. Rosa, who was captured, was arranged to be handed over to Callesia and the Resistance to be judged.

Heiburg military's main force was still conquering the first Ruin Babel at Triport in the New Kingdom.

In order to make the military retreat, it was necessary to thrust this case before Heiburg's military and make them recognize the crime.

Therefore, right now they were searching for the record of Rosa's transaction with Dragon Marauder behind the scenes and carrying out the procedure to appeal to the world alliance.

『My apologies Lux-san. I want you to wait for a bit more about the matter of

Rosa until Heiburg's complication is settled.]

The afternoon of the next day, Calensia showed herself at the inn where Lux, Philuffy, and then the Triad were staying. She said that while looking like it was very hard for her to say it.

If they appealed with this fact to the world alliance before Rosa's sin was formally judged, the Lords who wished for the annihilation of the traitor would interfere and the chance for Heiburg to clean itself up would be lost.

At present, because the majority of the military members staying in the capital were also those who were threatened by Rosa, they had rebelled and joined the Resistance's side.

In order to treat the many injured people, reorganize the organization, and ambush Rosa's subordinates, the Servants, Calensia wished for more time.

At that time, Lux feared Rosa's counterattack and thought that there was no choice but to kill her, but right now she was completely restrained and there was no risk of that.

And then—Lux who sympathized with Calensia's intentions decided to return to the New Kingdom for the moment.

From what he heard from the Triad, the capture of Babel by Heiburg's military was progressing well. They had reached until the tenth floor just the other day.

Including the highest floor, there were three floors remaining.

The pace of the capture was really high, but it wasn't because the Heiburg military's ability to investigate the Ruins was exceptionally excellent.

It seemed that the moment powerful Abyss came out, they would use a horn flute to let the Abyss escape outside the Ruin through the nearby transfer device.

Thus, the extermination of the Abyss was in reality being mostly done by the forces of the New Kingdom staying there. That was to say Lisha, Celis, Krulcifer, Yoruka, and the subordinates of Lord Dist.

Because the New Kingdom couldn't accompany the investigation, there was no proof that Heiburg was using a horn flute, but from the high frequency of

the Abyss's appearances outside, there was almost no doubt about it. Lisha and the others were glowering at Heiburg's military.

The gate that existed in the middle of the Ruin, on the sixth floor, seemed to be opened by Krulcifer because of Heiburg's request.

It was annoying to cooperate with them despite the possibility of the harm it would bring to the New Kingdom, but in the first place the world would perish if the Ruin wasn't liberated, so she couldn't refuse.

After hearing that story, Lux said to the Triad that he wanted them to go back to the New Kingdom to convey the situation here, but they refused.

They chose to constantly stand on guard around Lux while he was sleeping in the inn.

「If we take our eyes off from Lux-chi here, you are going to cross the goal line at once with Philuffy. If that happens, we won't have any face to meet everyone else.」

「Hahaha, well, she is hiding her embarrassment like this but, I'm also worried about you. Just because it's a difficult situation in the New Kingdom, there is no way we can leave you alone here while you are seriously injured with only the injured missy Philuffy to take care of you.」

「Yes. I judged that we should carry out the best action depending on the situation.」

Tillfur, Sharis, and Noct each said that and stayed here for him.

Philuffy's injury also wasn't shallow, but the Abyss's strength seemed to quicken her recovery. She was completely healed within a few days.

After that she diligently nursed Lux.

「Lu-chan. I made lunch. Open your mouth, aahn」

Philuffy made a vegetable soup that was different from the inn's meal and brought it to Lux.

Philuffy usually would make nothing but sweets, but it seemed she was taught by the inn's owner to make the soup.

After also eating a soft bread that was soaked into the soup, his feelings calmed down just for a bit.

When the meal was over, Philuffy wiped Lux's body for him using hot water and a towel.

But, Lux who was sitting up on the bed was still making a cloudy expression.

「Why.....」

Suddenly such words spilled out from Lux whose eyes were hollow.

Lux was unable to move all this time not just because of his physical exhaustion.

Since that day when he cornered Rosa and almost killed her, Lux's heart stayed cold as though he was dead.

「I wonder, why was I unable to finish off Rosa.....」

「.....」

Philuffy didn't answer Lux's question.

After stopping her hand's movement slightly, she wiped Lux's body again while slowly changing his bandage with slow hand movement.

「There was no other choice than that. If I killed her, everyone in Heiburg would be saved, and yet..... Even though I understood that she won't reform or anything, and yet—」

And yet, he was unable to finish her off.

He was unable to answer the expectations of his surroundings.

『I think from the view point of other countries, it must look like she is a really bad existence. But.....I cannot believe that.』

The words of Stefa who told him that she was worried about Rosa.

Even those words were blown away from his mind when Philuffy was slashed from behind.

But the moment he cornered Rosa until the very end, Lux's heart was shaken.

Even if that begging for her life was just her acting to trick him.

Even if it was just her getting her just desserts when the surroundings directed their hatred at her.

The Rosa at that moment overlapped with the image of himself when he was a child.

Just like when Lux was pleading tearfully, asking for help for his mother who met an accident and was on the verge of death.

「I couldn't kill her..... In the end, perhaps I am just like what Fugil-niisan said. I don't have the resolve to destroy evil for the sake of performing justice. I'm, unable to do anything, I cannot go anywhere. Something like achieving my ideal, from the start that's—」

『Someone who wasn't loved by anyone will try to be loved by anyone.』

Perhaps he was just like how Fugil expressed that, he was only fighting simply so that someone would recognize him, and that he had no true resolve.

(Then—I cannot continue anymore as a Seven Dragon Paladin like this.)

Lux was about to speak out that feeling into words, it was then.

「Ah.....」

A faint sweet scent enveloped Lux suddenly.

Philuffy was hugging Lux from behind while he was sitting up in order to have bandages wrapped on his body.

Lux had his voice stolen from him just from that action.

The sound of the clock's hand was carving into the stopped time.

「.....You're wrong, Lu-chan.」

Philuffy whispered into his ears gently, with a soft tone as though to persuade a child.

A tranquil smile was tugged on the lips of the girl who was reflected on the mirror inside the room.

「Lu-chan, isn't mistaken at all. That's why, don't worry.」

「Tsu.....!？」

Those words soaked into his chest, pushing out the emotions that he was suppressing.

Tears slowly overflowed from his eyes, as though they were squeezed out.

「But, I—!」

Was unable to grant everyone's wish.

He was unable to cut Heiburg's darkness called Rosa with his hands.

He was unable to persist in his justice even if he had to dirty his hands.

Just like five years ago, when he was abandoned by Fugil when he tried to save even the members of the Old Empire and failed.

「You see Lu-chan, what you want is not to beat someone who is the bad guy you know?」

Philuffy tightly hugged the shoulders of Lux that were trembling from the stirring in his chest and she told him her thought.

「Lu-chan, you are just unable to overlook it, when there is someone troubled in front of you. That's why—it's fine like this. Abandoning someone else who can be saved, for the sake of someone, it's fine even if you don't do that.」

「.....Uu, ku」

Instantly, strength left Lux's body. Drops of tears were spilling down from his eyes.

At that time, everyone told him to kill.

The soldiers of Heiburg who feared retaliation, and also Calensia, they wanted Lux to finish off Rosa.

But at that time, the fight was settled and Rosa was in a state that was unable to fight.

「That's why, don't force yourself. Don't hurt yourself. It will be fine, because I will protect Lu-chan, no matter what.」

「.....」

Her warmth enveloped the worn and beaten up Lux.

And then, Philuffy kept embracing him tightly until the beating of his heart had calmed down.

—It's nostalgic.

That painful day when he was worn out and beaten up, helpless to do anything.

This hug was just like the one she gave Lux that time, when he was standing still in front of the grave of his mother.

Episode 5 – First Ruin —Babel—

Part 1

「Then Rudi.....no, Lux-san will depart from this country already?」

The morning of the next day.

Lux who somehow managed to get up borrowed Philuffy's shoulder and came to the place of the blind girl, Stefa Hersmice.

Saved by Philuffy's consideration, the necessity of pretending to be on honeymoon was also gone, so Lux had stopped dying his hair since the battle against Rosa.

The same as before, they entered a deserted tea house without any signs of customers and talked about the particulars of the event this time.

Lux told Stefa that he was a member of the Seven Dragon Paladins who came to Heiburg for an investigation, and he also told her everything about what happened in the Underground Market and the showdown against Rosa.

Originally, Lux also invited Callesia to come along with him and Philuffy so that she could meet with Stefa, but Callesia apologetically smiled and refused.

『I was unable to do anything even while knowing about Rosa's wrongdoing. My family got taken hostage and the best I could do was to protect myself—. There was no choice left but to kill Rosa. Someone like me has no qualification to meet Stefa.』

Callesia told Lux that included within those hostages was none other than Stefa herself. She asked Lux to tell Stefa a message for her.

And then she said that she would prepare a countermeasure against Rosa's main subordinates, the Servants, who were currently staying at the New Kingdom, put Rosa into isolation, and also gather proof of her wrongdoings until now.

Or rather, Calensia would also fly to the New Kingdom around the same time as Lux's return there, so at that time she would bring with her the records about the transactions with Dragon Marauder for him too.

Rosa herself was terribly wounded. It was judged that she wouldn't be able to ride a Drag-Ride for three months.

Although it couldn't be said that it was completely settled, with this the case this time could be closed and head towards its conclusion.

By the way, Tillfur and Noct returned to the New Kingdom ahead. They would report about this matter to Lisha, Relie, and Lord Dist.

『Ah, speaking about that, if there is something that you want, I'll tell it to the headmaster you know? Lux-chi too cannot be underestimated eeh.』

Tillfur said that when she was about to depart. Most likely it was about the reward that Magialca mentioned before he departed to Heiburg.

It might also be Relie's instruction for them to choose a present for his little sister's birthday in the place of him, who was worked to death by this mission.

He was also aware about the matter of a present for Philuffy's birthday in the corner of his mind, but in the end he didn't find anything like that in the party at Heiburg and the Underground Market.

And so, Lux consulted Tillfur who came from a family background of famous craftsman and told her about the image of what he wanted.

『Hmmph. Is this for a present to give to someone? I also ree-ally want a present.』

She teased him with wide grin like that, but it felt like she would send his letter obediently.

A few days later after sending off the two.

The time for Lux to also go back to the New Kingdom had finally arrived.

「I'm still unable to believe about the matter regarding Rosa. That's why, as soon as I obtain the permission, I want to go meet her.」

「I'm sorry that I cannot be of use to you. Even though I should also ask various things from Lady Rosa myself.」

Lux who collapsed because of Over Limit's backlash was unable to meet with Rosa since then.

He only heard from Callesia that she was confined in an underground prison.

「No, I'm thinking to go meet her with my own legs. Certainly, Rosa pushed me aside on that night, even so, there was still the vestige of her past self remaining.」

That was the reason why Rosa didn't kill Stefa and kept her away.

「I'll ask Callesia to allow me to meet Rosa one more time. I want to be brave and try to talk to her. Really, thank you very much.」

The blind girl who was using a cane smiled slightly and bowed her head to Lux.

Lux too was also helped by her information and guidance.

He said his thanks for those and parted from her.

When he went outside first, an unexpected person was waiting for him in front of the bar.

「Thanks for your hard work Lux-kun. I'll also go back first to the Vanheim Principality after this. Surely even that Greifer is worried right now.」

「Thank you. We were saved that Coral came here.」

「No. More importantly, I'm glad. That you didn't kill Rosa at that time. Thanks to that, I can have a bit of confidence with my own thinking.」

「Eh.....?」

「Nn, no. It's about my own circumstance. Rather than that—now」

Coral suddenly brought his lips closer to Lux's ear and quietly whispered.

「Be careful Lux-kun. I investigated in my own way about the chain of events

this time, but there was something strange.]

「Something, strange.....?」

Lux asked back to Coral with a doubtful expression.

「Yes. This time, I investigated the King of Vices independently because of the special mission from the Vanheim Principality. And then using the opening when Lady Rosa was defeated, I tried searching inside the military command room but—there was traces in documents that everything was Rosa's deeds.]

「.....And, what about it?」

Lux tilted his head, unable to understand what Coral meant.

Rosa was making a deal with Dragon Marauder through the Underground Market and the military's stock was just as he expected.

To be able to obtain the proof of that, wasn't that something to be happy about without reserve?

「And yet, when I looked in the crucial places like her office or the commander's room, I couldn't find the key to the vault where the things for the transaction were gathered. I also didn't find the place of the treasures and Elixir from the Ruins that she should have procured from the transaction. I couldn't even find anything that was like a cipher.]

「That's, in other words.....?」

Lux didn't understand the meaning of what Coral wanted to say.

「I cannot say anything concrete. But, something is strange. Even though there is proof remaining, the crucial Ruin's treasures are mostly undiscovered. I could only find two rare Drag-Ride parts and a single horn flute. The number doesn't match up at all.]

「.....」

After hearing Coral's story, certainly something felt strange.

Were the treasures already handed over to the Servants?

No, even that felt out of place somehow.

But, Lux was unable to express it into words and they parted like that.

「Sayonara Lux-kun. Let's meet again, don't die okay?」

「Coral yourself, be careful.」

Coral only said that and turned around, then he flew his EX Wyvern and went up high into the sky.

Lux waved his hand and sent off the back of his friend, then he fell into deep thought.

Even though the proof of the transaction remained, the route to the treasures was still unknown.

Did Rosa herself hide the treasures somewhere on the off chance that she was defeated?

Either way, he could do nothing but wait for Callesia's report.

「Let's go too, Phi-chan. If we don't hurry back, something serious might happen in the New Kingdom—」

「Yes」

Philuffy nodded shortly and headed to a deserted back alley.

There Sharis of the Triad was waiting in advance as promised.

「Even princess Lisha and the others are waiting eagerly for your return. Now, both of you, please change into your pilot suits.」

Sharis was remaining here alone in order to carry Lux and Phillufu using her Wyvern's flight, in order to avoid the troublesome procedure of crossing borders.

Lux was unable to use his Wyvern because of his exhaustion, and Philuffy using her Typhon to run on the ground would be too conspicuous.

Tillfur and Noct had already left Heiburg. They were going to catch up with them before long.

「Sharis-san, you don't need to force yourself. It's really far from here until the port city Triport.」

This time, the Triad who came to assist them were also really helpful.

Lux said that with the intention to be considerate to Sharis, but Sharis's face was lacking composure.

「No, unfortunately there is no room here for presuming on your kindness. We held back from telling Lux-kun so you wouldn't feel worried while resting, but the current situation in Triport is already getting dangerous.」

「-..... That's, don't tell me—」

Sharis nodded shortly and directed a serious gaze at him.

「Yeah, the stationed troops of the Heiburg Republic had arrived at the eleventh floor the other day. If we are unlucky, the Ragnarok might be liberated within these few days.」

「——」

Lux held his breath. Even Philuffy opened her eyes slightly wider.

If the thirteenth floor was assumed to be the highest floor, then there was only one floor left that was separating Heiburg military from it.

If Heiburg military's plan was progressing just like Rosa mentioned, then there was a high chance that they would direct the Ragnarok to Triport deliberately.

「Please Sharis-san. Bring us as quick—」

「I intend to do so, leave it to me.」

The leader of the Triad nodded in response to the nervous voice of Lux.

Right after that, the Wyvern carrying the two flew high into the sky and rushed at full speed.

Part 2

Several screams and the sounds of destruction were resounding intermittently above.

「Haa, haa..... Haa.....-！」

An underground prison that was enclosed with stone walls around.

A girl was being hung down with chain inside.

She was only barely clothed with worn out rags. Her expression was completely haggard.

「Why, why..... Why」

She kept her hollow gaze directed towards a corner of the prison and continued to murmur with a hoarse voice that sounded delirious.

When Rosa was defeated by Lux, a single leg and arm of hers were broken. She was only given simple treatment before getting restrained like this.

Even though she had persisted on the path of evil, she was defeated.

Rosa's faith was smashed. She was spared from death after begging for her life.

Surely she was already abandoned.

In that case, everything was over already.

The things that she had sacrificed to come this far, and then the thing that she tried to protect until now too.

「Why. If in the end something like this will still happen to me then....., everything that I did until now was—」

Rosa groaned with a grieving expression.

Then, in a timing that was as though in concert with her voice, the

underground prison's door was slowly opened.

「—!? A, aa.....」

Seeing the face of the woman who appeared, Rosa's body was shaking fiercely.

The woman was soaked with blood.

And then, the smile that was distorted in joy, giving a hint of the slaughter that had ended above just now.

Guessing the tragedy that would happen to her after this, Rosa's expression was dyed with despair.

「How do you do Rosa? I'm bringing good news for you. I want you to cooperate with me one more time. By doing that, you will be able to come back once more to your position.」

Saying that, the woman in front of her presented her plan.

A few minutes later, Rosa's figure vanished from the prison.

Part 3

「This place, is port city Triport.....?」

They had Sharis flying in full speed until they arrived in the New Kingdom. After entering the New Kingdom's territory, they ran on land until here using Philuffy's Typhon.

By the way, midway Sharis used up all of her strength and fell exhausted, so she rested while right now only Lux and Philuffy arrived ahead at the port city.

The time was already dusk. The red evening sun was sinking into the horizon, illuminating the port city beautifully.

It was a port city with history that was governed by Celis's father, the feudal lord of the New Kingdom's west territory.

Even though there was Babel located relatively nearby, it should be a lively and bustling port city due to the protection of the troops commanded by Dist, but—

「Somehow, it's quiet. Also, the smell is strange too.」

Philuffy was unusually making a dubious face. She was staring at the silent townscape.

They also couldn't see merchant ships from the port, and there was almost no sign of people.

A desolate atmosphere was drifting off, as though the city had been abandoned.

「There is also Onee-chan's company here, so—I'll go take a look for a bit, okay?」

After staring at that sight absentmindedly for a while, Philuffy suddenly said while looking at a large building far away.

「Yes. It's all right already after coming this far, go ahead.」

「.....Understood.」

He wasn't just being considerate of Philuffy, Lux himself also had something he wanted to investigate before the sun set.

Thus Lux was going to head to a place where he would be able to get a clear view of the port, then—

「Oh, you there, are you a Drag-Knight who came from the New Kingdom? You are really young though.」

Suddenly when Lux turned around, a bald and thin old man addressed him.

「No, I'm still a military cadet. Rather than that, did something happen to this Triport?」

「It's unbelievable. Heiburg's forces have only been here for around two weeks, but those guys are devouring this city completely.」

The old man lamented Lux's question while speaking about the current situation.

In order to conquer Babel, this port city was made into a base. Since then, the Abyss were attacking frequently.

Even recently when the Ruins were invigorated, the Abyss would appear with a frequency of five, six times per month, but right now more than ten would appear in a day.

Nothing serious happened due to the conspicuous effort of Lisha and the others who assisted the New Kingdom, but the citizens who got scared and escaped to the neighboring city appeared without end. Heiburg's troops were increasingly acting as they pleased.

「What's more, a rumor from somewhere is circulating, saying that an especially large Abyss called Ragnarok will appear soon. The population of this Triport is reduced until less than a third. Even they are unable to walk around outside at daytime in fear of the Abyss. At night, they have to give reception to Heiburg's soldiers who finished working. It's only natural that everyone hates it with this situation.」

「.....-! What are the soldiers of the New Kingdom doing?」

Lux asked in a hurry, but the old man sighed and shook his head.

「Unfortunately, during these two weeks the number of people who can fight has decreased by a lot. Thanks to that large swarm of the Abyss, most of the Drag-Knights were injured.」

「Is, that so.....」

No matter how active Lisha and the others were in their efforts, they weren't able to stop all the Abyss that appeared. And their Drag-Ride operational time was also limited.

During that time the forces of Lord Dist also fought and used up their strength.

If this was the case, he needed to report about Rosa's matter even for a second faster.

How her sin was exposed in Heiburg, and how Babel's conquering had to be stopped.

「I'm sorry, who is the current commander of the forces that is dispatched here?」

「Hm.....? No, I'm just a mere sailor. I don't know the details about the Heiburg military. It seems the commander is taking command in a frontline base nearby Babel, but more importantly, that collar, could it be you are—」

「Ah, yes. I'm Lux Arcadia. A prince of the former Old Empire.....」

Lux smiled with a troubled look while pointing at his own collar.

In his period of doing chores, he hadn't stayed for long at Triport, so his face wasn't well known here.

But, the silver hair and eyes that were characteristic of the imperial family.

And then the collar of a criminal was the symbol of that, but because of the madder red color of the evening sun, it seemed the old man didn't notice until now.

「I, is that so..... You are—then, excuse me.」

「.....？」

The bald old man showed agitation while trying to leave from that place.

Even though Lux was feeling something out of place, he could only tilt his head in puzzlement.

「Is it as I thought, that everyone is at the front line fortress near Babel?」

Although from the story that the Triad told him, he heard that even the soldiers of Heiburg stopped the Ruin conquering at sunset.

In other words, no Abyss would appear from now until tomorrow.

Lux judged that his option at present was to reunite with Philuffy here, and then linked up with Lisha and the others who returned from the frontlines.

「Today will come to an end soon huh—」

Looking closer, the evening sun had set completely. The curtain of night was starting to descend.

When Lux focused on meeting with Philuffy, a strange presence suddenly came from behind.

「Hoo, so this is that famous Black Hero? Aren't you still a cute boy?」

The one who appeared was a woman of blooming age wearing black military uniform.

Similar to Rosa, she was enveloped with arrogant hostility that overwhelmed other people. That bearing of hers resembled the imperial family and the nobles of the Old Empire.

「You are—」

「What, I'm just checking. It will be troublesome if you make excuses of being another person.」

While Lux was bewildered, the woman walked closer with a fearless smile. Her military boots were making clicking sounds on the ground.

「My name is Gutefelica, the general of the Heiburg Republic. Traitor Lux Arcadia. I will capture you now and present you to the world alliance.」

「.....Wha-!?」

The moment she told him that, Lux's expression showed bewilderment.

「Oops, don't move. My subordinates are already behind you. You won't be able to dodge a barrage from Breath Gun with that injured body.」

The moment Gutefelica introduced herself, the space behind her distorted and Drag-Rides appeared from the empty spot.

It was two Heiburg soldiers wearing general purpose Drag-Rides who appeared.

Using the function of the special equipment type, they were hiding using camouflage.

「What are you planning? Pointing a weapon at someone in the middle of a city like this」

As expected even Lux had to raise both his hands with a doubtful face.

But, in contrast Gutefelica didn't change her bewitching smile and brought her face closer to Lux.

「Well well, aren't you a kid with worse perceptiveness than I thought? Are you listening? I'll give you a hint. It was the old man just now who told us about your location. He is a citizen of this port city. The notice that those who informed of your location will be given a money reward has been spread in this city since a long time ago.」

「——」

The moment Lux saw the wicked smile of Gutefelica, a shudder ran through his back.

Now Lux realized the fatal carelessness he had committed.

The sense of liberation from the nervousness when he was staying in Heiburg and his exhausted body was dimming his thought.

「Hoo, you are making a clueless face. Then I'll point out your wretchedness once more right now. You illegally infiltrated Heiburg to attempt an assassination on Lady Rosa in order to stop the Heiburg military from

conquering Babel. You damn traitor—the rebel against the world alliance!】

Gutefelica smugly threw a ridiculing and mocking gaze at Lux.

The moment Lux sensed that, his hand almost reached out towards his Sword Device, but he stopped.

「Good kid. Nothing good will come from you making a ruckus here. I'll be affectionate to you if you are obedient. It will be as my pet though.....】

「My, you're wrong. That conclusion is a misunderstanding.】

「.....!?】

A girl's voice suddenly came from somewhere.

The moment everyone there was taken aback, something unusual happened.

「Gu, AAAH!】

「Wha, what. The Drag-Ride's control is—】

「What are you all doing-!?】

Heiburg's troops who were riding Drakes suddenly raised their Blades against Gutefelica.

Even so as expected from a general, she reacted even against the surprise attack and barely dodged.

At the same time she pulled out her Sword Device quickly. At that timing, Lux's body floated in the air.

「Chih! You think you can get away! Surround the town and search for him! Don't let him escape from this city-!】

But, while she was obstructed by two Drakes, Lux was safely rescued from that place.

What took Lux away and carried him was the work of a Drag-Ride that was similarly in camouflage.

It was one of the students from the Academy on the side of the New Kingdom whom he knew well.

「Yoruka!? Why are you here—!?】

「Aruji-sama is asking a strange thing. I am always by Aruji-sama's side.」

Lux realized that he was rescued by Yoruka who was wearing her Divine Drag-Ride Yato no Kami.

She was also requested by the New Kingdom and came to guard this Triport.

「What is this situation? Philuffy, is she safe!?」

「There is no need to worry. She is also being sheltered by the headmaster. But, although she herself has no charge against her, in this situation right now it will be better if she doesn't show herself.」

It seemed that the treatment as a criminal didn't reach as far as Philuffy.

But, although he comprehended the current situation, there were several inexplicable things.

「—Now, I believe around here will be fine.」

Suddenly Yoruka stopped Yato no Kami's leap and put down Lux on the ground.

There they seemed to be in a neighborhood for the wealthy within Triport. Relatively big residences were lining up.

Surely there were a lot of traders here who did business at the port.

「It seems that the general from just now is still pursuing, so I will lure her suitably before giving her the slip. If Aruji-sama goes straight on this street, you will arrive at our hideout.」

「Thank you. But, don't be reckless. I still don't comprehend this situation.」

「As you will it, Aruji-sama.」

Yoruka kicked on the air once more and left along with a bewitching smile.

After seeing her off, Lux started walking through the street of the residential district.

Perhaps because the sun had set completely, there were few passerbys. Under the evening darkness, Lux was feeling a strange gaze on him.

After parting from Yoruka, he could clearly hear the sound of footsteps

following him.

(Is it a new pursuer from the Heiburg military? Or else—)

Lux once more felt for real that there was a prize money for his head.

Right now, limited to this place, even the citizens of Triport would tattle about Lux's location.

He had to somehow give the slip to his pursuer, but right now it was hard to even escape for Lux.

When he was thinking that, a girl who was walking from slightly far away quickly took Lux's hand and broke into a run.

「This way. Our hideout is underground slightly far from here.」

「Krucifer-san!? Why—」

The echo of that familiar voice made Lux murmur with a nostalgic feeling.

After she took off the hat hiding her face, she brushed up her long blue hair which exposed the side of her beautiful face.

The overseas student who was Lux's classmate and was extremely intimate with him was there.

「You noticed a bit late, but I'll forgive you. It looks like Lux-kun too has gone through various troubles.」

She displayed her usual cool smile while telling him that.

Lux sighed in relieve, then he heard the faint sound of a Drag-Ride moving from behind.

「Wait! What are you doing monopolizing the achievement by yourself!? I'm also here you know!？」

Almost at the same time, he saw blonde hair tied into a side tail swaying beside him.

Lisha wearing a Drake was on his side unnoticed.

「I wonder what you are talking about? It was you who decided to focus fully on using camouflage and probing devices because it will be conspicuous to wear

a Drag-Ride in the open.]

「That's true but..... right now it's fine. There is no sign of anyone in pursuit or the reaction of other Drag-Rides.]

「.....Haa, good grief. Then, let's proceed straight to the safe house like this.]

Prompted by Krulcifer who sighed in exasperation, they knocked on the back door of a church.

「—It's me. I brought him with me.]

After Krulcifer shortly said that, the church's door was opened.

Then, a young nun wearing a veil appeared and slowly beckoned to come in.

It seemed that there were also citizens who were cooperating with Lux.

「Thank you very much. You saved us.]

When Lux's expression relaxed in relief and he said his gratitude, the nun quickly turned around and looked up at Lux with a reproachful gaze.

「Your welcome. It proved to be worthwhile for me to be waiting. It is difficult to follow up on Nii-san who is bringing trouble as soon as you came back.]

「Wait, Airi!? Why are you dressed like that—!?]」

「Does it looks good on me? Because Nii-san did bad things and I almost got captured, I have no choice but to hide like this. After all, they were trying to capture me who is your little sister to be used as bait to lure out Nii-san.]

「.....」

Airi's smile that was plainly filled with thorns caused Lux to stiffen in mute amazement.

「How about you let him off with that much? The case this time should be something unpleasant for him too.]

When Krulcifer calmly persuaded her so, Airi climbed down the stairs inside a small room and started walking inside an underground passage.

「This way. Everyone is waiting already.]

「This place, just where—?」



Lux muttered while looking around the long dark passage. Airi immediately replied to him while keeping her gaze to the front.

「It's a hidden passage for the use of a rich person.」

After telling him that frankly, Krulcifer added some more explanation for him.

Originally it was an underground waterway for manufacturing work, but it was also constructed as an emergency hideout as well as an escape route. It seemed that it was further connected to the church and other escape routes.

It was a hidden passage because of the consideration to the city's nearness to the Ruin Babel.

There was nothing underground, but it could connect to the inside of each residence.

Even the New Kingdom military didn't know about the information of this passage.

After walking for a while inside the dark passage with a lantern in hand, they opened the lock of a door that connected to a side path.

From there they climbed up a stair to directly above, and came out into a basement that was like a wine cellar.

「This seems to be a villa that also doubled as a warehouse of the Aingram conglomerate. It's not known publicly, so you can relax here.」

Following Krulcifer's guidance, Lux entered inside the residence.

They headed to the living room of the mansion where all the windows were covered with curtains and they could finally relax.

「And so, we were able to collect Lux safely. Originally I planned to open a celebration wine for the success of the secret investigation but—」

Lisha faltered mid-sentence.

「Just what is happening in this city? About the reward money for me being a traitor—」

「It's not just this city, it's the whole country Nii-san. Right now Nii-san is in the position where even the New Kingdom prepared a money reward for your

head. Even I originally should be captured by the New Kingdom military as bait to lure out Nii-san.]

When he listened to the detailed story, it seemed that before the Triad could report about Rosa's backroom dealing, a report that Lux was a traitor who tried to assassinate Rosa came.

And then the female general Gutefelica who was leading the Heiburg troops began to oppress the people of the New Kingdom since half a day ago.

First the Drag-Knights including Lisha and the others had their actions restricted to only around the port. They were forbidden to approach Babel.

Furthermore, the Heiburg military was searching since the morning without regards to the citizens or the New Kingdom military. They even broke into the houses.

Because of that rough intervention, the hearts of the citizens suffered damage and they were seething with tense anger.

「Even so, just what in the world happened.....?」

The story sounded simple, but there were several incomprehensible parts.

Seeing the chronological order, the next day after that evening where Lux fought Rosa and cornered her, a messenger from Heiburg with the message that Lux was a traitor had already departed to here.

「However, how did the other side expose my infiltration? There should be no proof or any—」

「There is proof. I was also astonished at first though.....」

Lisha hung her head down with a sigh.

Like that, Lux touched the sword belt on his waist.

Originally there were two Sword Devices hanging from there. Now one of the sheaths was empty—

The Sword Device of his Wyvern was lost amidst the confusion of that battle.

Without the corresponding Sword Device, the Drag-Ride couldn't be moved. Because of that, even now his Wyvern was unable to be moved from the

warehouse of the Aingram Conglomerate located in Heiburg's capital Hidehelm—

「Then, don't tell me.....?」

「Yeah, the Sword Device that those Heiburg lots handed in was certainly something with your name Lux, engraved on it. The name of the possessor of a general purpose Drag-Ride is recorded in the New Kingdom, so there is no mistake.」

Lisha informed with a bitter face.

Lux's name was engraved on his Sword Device since the beginning, added to that, if he was told to try to summon his Drag-Ride to proof that it wasn't his, then he would have no way to make an excuse.

「That's why, until the enemy that set the trap for Nii-san is defeated, Nii-san needs to hide like this here. If Nii-san is discovered, Nii-san will be apprehended right away and the New Kingdom's position will become bad.」

At present, Lux was suspected as an assassin, and the Drag-Knights of the New Kingdom were distanced from Babel.

They couldn't even enter the front line base that was for defense and were forced to intercept the arriving Abyss from the rampart that was adjacent to this Triport. They were forestalled.

「By the way, Celis-senpai is—?」

He saw Yoruka just now, and the Triad weren't here because of their role as information messengers. It concerned Lux that he still hadn't seen Celis's figure.

「My? It's good news seeing that you still care about Celis-senpai. It doesn't look like you have been united with that childhood friend of yours in the honeymoon.」

Krulcifer reacted to Lux's muttering and whispered so with a smile.

「Se, see, it's just as I thought. I, I believed in Lux all this time.....!」

「What are you saying while making a face that looks relieved from the bottom of your heart like that.....」

Lisha crossed her arms and puffed out her chest. Beside her, Airi who had changed into her uniform retorted.

「Wai-!? Don't make fun of me. Phi-chan and I only pretended to be husband and wife in order to infiltrate, such thing—」

Lux was saying that while he reflexively recalled the days of his travel that he spent with Philuffy.

The memory of riding together the shaking coach and the bashful memory of getting treated like husband and wife.

And then, how Philuffy saved Lux when he was suffering from the course of defeating Rosa, and how she was nursing him wholeheartedly.

How she was supporting him with kindness that was unchanging since the past.

His chest was naturally getting heated while recalling that.

(Wait, just what am I thinking.....!? Even Phi-chan, it's not like she—)

He was charmed by her even while denying his own thoughts.

No, in the past his thoughts were filled with nothing but changing the Old Empire, but perhaps, since that time he had actually felt about Philuffy—

「Yes yes. I understand you all are trying to break the tension, but let's stop here. After all Celis-senpai had just come back too.」

Lux was suddenly returned to his senses from Airi's voice.

When he looked there, he found Celis who had just climbed the stairs of the underground room and stood inside the living room.

「Lux—!? You are safe!」

The moment he was about to greet her, Celis suddenly hugged him tightly.

The trained firm slender body, and the soft sensation that was characteristic of a girl.

It seemed she had fought just before this, the scent of her sweat was tickling Lux's emotions.

「.....Wait, what are you doing Celis!? Hugging Lux out of nowhere like that—」

Lisha who saw that turned red and flared up. Hearing that Celis was also taken aback and got away from Lux.

「Pa, pardon me! That's, it's because I've been worried about Lux all this time. I also heard how he was wanted with a money reward as a criminal, and there was also his deathly battle with Lady Rosa.....」

「.....Ahaha, I'm fine. Though I'm a bit tired, but as senpai can see I'm lively like this.」

Lux quickly smiled and answered like that.

His dear and reliable comrades from the Academy.

He only went to Heiburg for about a week, but even Lux himself felt lonely there.

He had already blended completely into the ordinary days he spent with these girls.

「But, I'm reflecting. To be overcome with emotion and hug like that without thinking about Lux himself, I have done something unbecoming for the captain of Syvalles.」

Celis's cheeks reddened while she hung her head down. Lux smiled wryly.

And then, he slowly took her hand.

「Thank you very much Celis-senpai. For protecting the New Kingdom while I wasn't here—」

「Lux.....」

When he told her his feeling of gratitude with a straightforward gaze, Celis's cheeks blushed slightly.

He had heard about Celis's strenuous effort from the Triad.

In the battle this time, she stayed in this Triport longer than anyone and defeated the Abyss continuously.

Her stamina and skill that she had trained by disciplining herself strictly everyday.

And then, the strong heart that allowed her to accomplish that was something that Lux respected.

When an indescribable pleasant atmosphere was flowing between Lux and Celis—

「My? You were really worried about her weren't you? Although, the one who was waiting for your return here isn't just Celis-senpai you know?」

「Ah, yes. Thank you, Krulcifer-san. And also Lisha-sama too.」

「That's right! We too were doing various things while waiting for you!」

「Yes yes. Please leave that kind of thing for later, How astonishing all of you are, to be able to compete for Nii-san so harmoniously in an emergency situation like this.」

「A,ahaha.....」

The three girls faltered from Airi's retort that was said with a completely exasperated tone.

「Although, your body won't hold if you don't rest, so let's take a meal and bath. I'll say this though, Nii-san. Please enter the bath alone tonight okay?」

「Wai-!? What's with that way of talking as though I am usually entering bath together with someone!?」

When Lux was flustered, Airi sent him a reproachful gaze.

「Nii-san got helped by Philuffy-san anyway right? The backlash from Over Limit should make Nii-san unable to move your body properly after all.」

(Even my physical condition got completely seen through-.....!)

It seemed that Noct properly reported even that kind of information too.

「Wha, wha-wha-what is the meaning of that Lux-!? Don't tell me, you and that airheaded girl, together in the bath—!」

「It's a misunderstanding! She only helped me wiping my body.」

「I, is that so. Then, I can feel relieved.」

For some reason Celis let out a relieved sigh hearing that and patted down

her chest, but Krulcifer was smiling with a suspecting gaze at him.

「As expected from Lux-kun's wife. She is even more ahead than me who is your fiancée candidate.」

「Why is Krulcifer-san's gaze to me cold for some reason!?」

「And so, the bath has been heated up, so please say it if Nii-san needs help. If so I will help out Nii-san as your little sister.」

「Ah, right. Please.....」

Lux smiled awkwardly while being guided toward a separate room in the mansion. And then he entered the bath.

He was uneasy wondering if whether someone like Yoruka would barge in, but fortunately nothing happened and he was able to finish his bath safely.

After that, while everyone was alternately having a bath, the Triad who were leading Philuffy and Yoruka with them, also entered into the mansion from the underground.

It seemed, Celis's father who was protecting this city, Lord Dist, and headmaster Relie had talked to them. Everyone was eating dinner together in the living room while having a meeting.

「Then, I'm thinking to carry out a strategy meeting to change our original plan from here on. Everyone, it's okay to eat at the same time, but please listen carefully.」

Everyone nodded at Airi's words and they began to eat quietly.

On the table that was brightly illuminated by lamp, various dishes that had been prepared before they knew it were lined up until there was almost no space left.

Meats like beef, pork, poultry, and lamb that were roasted with pepper and rock salt.

Consomme soup that was filled with a lot of vegetables.

And then bread and cheese, pickles and the like were also provided in plenty. They weren't really in the mood to make a ruckus, so the girls were eating

quietly.

During that time, Airi was speaking about the summary of the chronological events until now.

The Sword Device of Lux's Wyvern was stolen unnoticed and fell into Heiburg's hands. It was then used as proof for sticking a criminal charge to Lux.

The captured Rosa made use of some kind of method and escaped from Heiburg's prison.

And then, before long there was a risk of a Ragnarok's appearance when the deepest level of Abyss was reached and conquered.

「It will be Heiburg's soldiers who fight with the Ragnarok, but if they run away, the nearby town will be attacked. For them, it will be great if they can defeat it successfully, but if it become dangerous, they can run away and leave it to the New Kingdom.」

「Could we also abandon this city and take some distance?」

Yoruka who was listening to the talk made a frank remark, but Lisha immediately lifted up her face.

「There is no way we can do that you ero woman! If we leave from here, what will happen to this city!?」

「Right. Besides, it's unfortunate but if we escape then the Ragnarok will come attacking everywhere inside the New Kingdom's territory. Even if we retreat temporarily, in the end we will have to fight it all the same.」

「Yes. Also, I cannot let the name of my father, one of the Four Great Nobles who is governing this west territory to be besmirched further.」

「Munya..... I'll, work hard too.」

After Lisha, Krulcifer, and then Celis spoke their determination. Philuffy also nodded in agreement.

On the other hand, the Triad was standing still with a conflicted expression.

「Honestly though, I'm scared. The strength of someone like me won't be any use against a Ragnarok.」

Tillfur smiled bitterly with an embarrassed look.

「I understand your feeling. After all, at the battle against Yggdrasil, even everyone with their Divine Drag-Rides still weren't a match even after fighting as a group.」

「Yes. We too aren't slacking off in our training, but as expected I judged that the burden is too hard if speaking about defeating a Ragnarok.」

「.....」

Lux and the others couldn't deny those words.

In fact, even Bahamut with Over Limit only won barely by a hair's breadth.

If the Ragnarok lurking within Babel appeared this time, it would be difficult to fight it properly using general purpose Drag-Rides.

「My, it's fine if you three escape right away you know? Either way, it will be us who are going to face this so-called Ragnarok.」

「Wait, Yoruka. Saying it like that is—!?」

Lux spontaneously opened his mouth hearing Yoruka telling the Triad insensitively like that with a carefree smile.

But, Sharis smiled with a sigh 'fuh' and faced Yoruka.

「I'm thankful that you said that, but there is also no way we can do that. Especially when this time Lux-kun and missy Philuffy are also tired. Even our insignificant strength can be of some use if we focus on working behind the scenes.」

「Well, I'll try doing my best somehow.」

「Yes. We will simply accept Yoruka-san's consideration thankfully.」

Tillfur clenched her fist, while Noct concluded it like that.

Yoruka making a practical conclusion like that was the usual thing, but hearing Noct saying 『Yoruka's consideration』, Lux felt happy inside his heart.

'Just leave the dangerous things to me'—Certainly what Yoruka said could also be interpreted like that.

Airi and Noct said that they would become Yoruka's friends even if for form's sake only, but Lux slightly felt it how they were really meeting each other halfway.

「Then, we will carry out the mission from tomorrow! Lux and little sister, don't leave this hideout for a while.」

And then, after everyone said their piece, the dialogue was concluded.

They could see the direction of their actions tomorrow.

First they would search for the Servants or perhaps Rosa. It might be them who stole Lux's Sword Device in Heiburg and brought it here.

The role for that information gathering would be the responsibility of Yoruka and the Triad whose faces weren't really known within the enemy camp.

Lisha and the others, the main force of the New Kingdom would be standing by before the front line base east of Triport like usual.....that was how it would be.

And then tonight, because the time had become late, everyone would stay here.

「Err, I will be in the same room as Airi?」

They went up to the second floor and got shown to a bedroom with two beds lined up.

「It can't be helped right? Nii-san right now isn't in completely good health. Or perhaps, Nii-san wants to sleep with another girl?」

「Yo, you misunderstand!? I didn't say anything like that—」

「I wonder about that? Nii-san surely has enjoyed the honeymoon life with Philuffy-san a lot, so maybe Nii-san feels it lacking to be with me your little sister?」

「Look here, I was doing that for the mission more or less though.....?」

「I'll believe it for now. Rest well, Nii-san.」

Airi ignored Lux's objection and turned off the light.

Silence was filling inside the room, but as expected Lux was unable to sleep.

「Is Nii-san still thinking some kind of needless matter?」

It seemed Airi sensed Lux's atmosphere that was like that. She called out to him from beside him.

Within the bedroom that was covered in an azure color, Lux slowly formed his words.

「I'm wondering, if I failed once more just as I thought..... Just like in the past, when I tried to do something about the Old Empire's tyranny and the chauvinism somehow.」

「.....」

After investigating Heiburg, he was convinced that it was the same like that time, that evil structure couldn't possibly be overturned as long as the ringleader wasn't defeated.

And then, Lux was cornered in his battle against Rosa.

He tried to make it so that the knights, authorities, and the imperial family members of the Old Empire survived, as many as possible, but due to Fugil who, like him, was also one of the actors in that revolution, Lux's effort was denied along with his betrayal.

「However, even I, it's not like I was dreaming that everyone could be saved. And then even if I sent them to prison, I think that they would still get sentenced to death as a result.」

「.....」

「I thought that I've made my resolve. I also believed that I know the path of how to protect this New Kingdom won't be that indulgent.」

「But, Nii-san couldn't do it right? Making yourself to kill Lady Rosa.」

「Yes.....」

Lux didn't look at Airi's face. He kept looking up at the ceiling and muttered.

「Phi-chan, when I was about to get swept up by the voices of the surroundings, she stopped me.」

「Nii-san isn't feeling, that she was in the way?」

Airi unexpectedly cut into the matter sharply, but there was no malice within her voice.

It looked like she was simply asking in an attempt to ascertain Lux's feelings.

「I was thinking that I wouldn't be able to save everyone if I didn't kill Rosa. But, cutting off her head at that time when she was already unable to move is something that I couldn't do. Besides, it felt like something was out of place. I felt resistance about killing her unrelated to the matter of good and evil and her sin.」

「Is there still some unresolved puzzle left? In regards to her—」

Lux quietly cast down his eyes and nodded powerlessly.

(Wait—why didn't she, go to meet her until the very end?)

Thinking carefully, there were several inexplicable things in that battle.

And then, he didn't understand that uncomfortable feeling because he was only paying attention to Rosa.

「However, Nii-san is calm even after going through that aren't you? Haa, it's vexing but perhaps it was the correct choice that Philuffy-san accompanied Nii-san.」

「Wai-!? You too Airi, don't make fun of me like the others.」

「Why is it I'm unable to use a Drag-Ride..... Even I—」

When Airi was about to say something, at that time.

—

—*DOooOONN!*

—

An intense explosive sound resounded outside.

「.....-!？」

The two immediately brushed aside their blankets and got up right away.

Their bodies stiffened from nervousness wondering if their location had been found out, but in that moment, sounds of a bell and people's angry yell could be

heard from outside.

「Abyss! The Abyss appeared from Babel-!」

「Everyone run away, we are going to get attacked too-!」

「.....!? No way, don't tell me!」

Lux immediately approached the window and he was about to open the curtain, but Airi who was also standing up grasped Lux's hand with a nervous expression and shook her head slightly.

「I'll wake up the Triad and have them take a look at the situation. Nii-san, please don't show your face outside. No matter what you mustn't do that.」

「.....」

'Why'—He was about to ask, but Lux guessed Airi's thinking.

In any case, right now, Lux couldn't get involved.

Right now Lux couldn't move Bahamut fully, and above all else he was a wanted person. If he went outside, the Heiburg military would notice.

Airi who was living in the position as a criminal since the past had strong wariness in that aspect.

Thinking back now, it was also unnatural how the people's voices were calling out without any mention of Heiburg.

By any chance, could it be a lure with the expectation that it would make Lux open the curtain or even rush outside?

「If this is a trap, then the opponent is really outrageous. Heiburg's King of Vices is—」

Airi muttered with sweat trickling down from her forehead slowly.

Could it be that before they could determine Rosa's location, the other party had already made their move this quickly?

The two went down to the first floor in a hurry. There, the familiar members were already changing into their pilot suits.

「It looks like the opponent is also really in a hurry. To think that they will

make their move this quickly.]

First Krulcifer muttered that while brushing up her hair.

Responding to that, Lisha lifted up her face with an unusually tense expression.

「But, if the Abyss attack is a trap, if we can confirm that it's their lie, even without us going outside—」

「No, most likely we won't be able to do that. They have the horn flute, if we fall behind it will be too late.」

Celis kept her hand supporting her chin and muttered with a bitter expression.

Seeing everyone hesitating to speak in bafflement, Airi came to a sudden realization in surprise and she spoke.

「They have thoroughly let the Abyss escape outside from the tower until now, exposing the city to danger while advancing their investigation at the same time. Are they going to hesitate after this far?」

「I can also hear the sound of a horn flute, so I think, that's not wrong.」

Hearing what Airi pointed out, Philuffy pressed her ear and muttered that. Krulcifer also nodded in agreement.

「It seems they are also desperate. They are intending to concentrate their full force to search for Lux-kun who is in this city right now.」

「If we keep hiding like this, the town will be destroyed by the Abyss from the horn flute's command. But, if we go out to intercept, it will be easier for them to search for Lux and little sister, is that it?」

After Lisha muttered as though she was asking herself, everyone wordlessly nodded.

And then, if the Ragnarok was released in this confusion, the situation where all of them were separated from each other would be taken advantage of and they might get annihilated.

The situation was already overwhelmingly disadvantageous for them.

「But, there is also an opening that we can take advantage of. There is someone playing the horn flute to control the Abyss and making them attack here, that means—」

Receiving Airi's pleading gaze, Lux nodded.

「Everyone, please. I want you all to cooperate and quickly intercept the Abyss that are advancing here right now due to the horn flute. We have to protect the people of Triport and the forces of Lord Dist. And then—」

「At the same time, we will locate the person who is using the horn flute to manipulate the Abyss. That's the plan right? If we catch them red-handed, then we can make an excuse to capture them.」

Krulcifer continued like that. Celis also nodded.

「An operation on a scale this large surely has a chain of command. If we can ascertain it.....」

「Looks like we have no other choice. Right now is the chance while the enemy is attacking.」

「Then, Nii-san—please decide the strategy.」

Prompted by Airi, Lux quickly made his decision.

And then, a few minutes later.

Lisha and everyone else moved in to counterattack.

Part 4

「Fufufufu! This is exhilarating! The old empire that once oppressed Heiburg utterly. To be able to trample these guys like this—life is full of surprises.」

A woman wearing an EX Wyvern was looking down on the blazing townscape while laughing.

She was enjoying that wartime fire through her white mask while playing a flute above a viewing platform.

That was the tone of horn flute to manipulate the Abyss that was excavated from the Ruin.

「Now then. Let's suppress the firepower a bit more while tormenting them slowly. There is also the next mission after this, doing this moderately—!?」

Numerous Abyss that the masked woman was manipulating using the flute were shot by a blue flash one after another that froze them.

Right after the Abyss like Gargoyles and Chimeras had their movement stopped, a pursuing attack smashed them into pieces.

「Freezing bullet and sniping..... the user of those is—」

- Bishi-!* , at that moment, a streak of light was fired and hit the Drag-Ride the woman wore.

The Blade she was holding froze. The moment her eyes snapped open in surprise, a girl was flying before her eyes.

「You look like you are having fun, can you allow me to join too?」

Krulcifer wearing Fafnir readied her Freezing Cannon and thrust its muzzle towards the enemy.

「You came faster than I thought. A lowly ^{tool} of Ruin that was chased away

from the Ymir Theocracy like you dares to—. Are you trying to have the New Kingdom keep you as their pet by acting loyal to them?」

「I wonder where is Lady Rosa? My bad, but I have no free time to play with a small fry like you.」

「—Hah.」

Krulcifer ignored the provocation and told the woman so. The woman bared a wicked grin under her mask.

「Fine. My name is Zecta Bergios of the Sky Punishment, one of the Servants. I'll give a special lesson to this spoiled Ojou-sama who is only used to the mock battle game.」

Above the viewing platform with the view of the port city, Krulcifer's fight began.

Part 5

「Ple, please. The Abyss are attacking! Help—gafuh!？」

One guard who was running from the flying Abyss pursuing him was atrociously blown away by a bomb blast.

「For a guard to be the first one to escape, how foolish. Just because you don't have a Drag-Ride—」

A wharf located at the west of Triport.

In that place that became remarkably quiet because in these few days there was no more ships coming, a completely black man was standing wearing an EX Wyrm.

The land battle type Wyrm was hiding a potential of being able to be loaded with a large amount of armaments, but that man's armament was only one. A thick chain that was like rope with a thorny iron ball attached on its end.

The Smashing Punishment Goldia.

That was the name of this masked man who possessed a muscular body.

「A worthless town. And then—a worthless country. What meaning does a soldier that possesses no strength at all could have?」

A muffled voice was raised under the mask as though he was questioning himself.

Next he readied his iron ball once more and threw it towards the soldier who was still barely alive.

The iron ball flew with powerful speed that even the eyes couldn't follow, however its trajectory changed and it sank into the ground of the wharf.

「Nuu.....」

When he noticed, even the Drag-Ride that Goldia himself was wearing already

got heavy.

A gravity field that was tinged with purple light was restraining him.

「It's amazing how you can boast like that when you are only facing weaponless people. It's you who is the most worthless! If you surrender right away then I'll let you off with only getting half-killed!」

Lisha who was wearing the Divine Drag-Ride Tiamat was proclaiming that from the sky.

The targeting of Tiamat's special armament, the giant cannon Seven Heads had already captured Goldia.

「For the princess of the New Kingdom to personally come out, that's some fortitude. Allow me to test your caliber.」

The large man's mouth distorted into an arc shape at the appearance of a powerful enemy.

Right after that, he started to move as though dragging his body even with the gravity field sealing his body movement.

Part 6

In front of the government building at the center of the port city.

In front of that place where the commanding officers of the force, including Lord Dist were gathered, the third Servant appeared.

The elite Drag-Knights, the Servants, who were the direct subordinates of the King of Vices, wouldn't expose their bare faces at the New Kingdom.

A tall man whose face was covered by a white mask was calling even more Abyss using a horn flute.

「.....Are you the Drag-Knight of a perished country that we heard from Dragon Marauder, Kirihiime, something?」

「My? So you know my name? Even though I'm planning to conceal myself.」

Saying that, Yoruka dispelled the camouflage of Yato no Kami and showed herself before the man.

On the other hand, one of the Servants, the Flame Punishment Viji was also wearing the same type of Drag-Ride, the special equipment type, EX Drake.

If it was the same type that also possessed a probing device, it could also see through the opponent who had the camouflage function activated.

「If you stop the sound of that flute and tell me the location of Rosa Granhide, I won't mind to at least let you keep your life you know?」

Yoruka thrust out her katana-type Blade and declared so, but Viji wasn't moved.

「The likes of a dog who changed master from the Old Empire to the New Kingdom like you, it's astonishing that you can still bark like that.」

Viji sneered even more and blew his flute—but, the next moment. The flute was split into two along with the mechanical right arm that was holding it.

「—!?」

Even though Yoruka should still be outside the range, and yet she approached instantly and slashed. That technique caused Viji to blink in amazement.

Viji moved his EX Drake's four legs in a hurry and leaped backwards. Yoruka's eyes narrowed slightly.

「Unfortunately I have no emotion. There is no need for that kind of pointless talk. But—if you still have the leeway to speak once more, then I don't mind if you continue you know?」

「.....Kuh!」

Viji who instantly sensed danger activated the knapsack mechanism on his back that was a rare armament.

Right after that, when Yoruka leaped to pursue him, the surrounding buildings were enveloped in flames.

Part 7

「You guys are quite something. To be able to rush to where we are in a straight line like this.」

And then, at the front line base at the east where it was the nearest to Babel.

On the parapet in front of it, a woman with a bared face was standing.

The woman general who was commanding the Heiburg Republic's military that was staying here loosened her cheeks at the entrance of a worthy opponent.

「Pushing into this city is troublesome, but as expected something like conquering the Ruin is suffocating. It's far more interesting to fight facing a human opponent. Don't you think so, Celistia?」

Celis who was wearing Lindwurm was glaring silently at her opponent above the parapet.

「Unfortunately, I find it hard to agree with your opinion. After all, when fighting a human opponent, there are many more things that needs to be considered.」

「Hou? Then how about you go save the citizens who are being attacked by the Abyss? There is no one who needs to be saved in an empty place like this.」

「.....How long you are intending to vent your resentment on the New Kingdom? Do you want to repay back the debt that you received from the era of the Old Empire by that much? To even go as far as carrying out this kind of plan.」

Gutefelica was playing dumb, but Celis didn't follow along with her act.

She sent her an aloof gaze that overwhelmed other people and asked quietly. That this situation was the plan of the King of Vices to destroy the New

Kingdom.

Celis was talking with the assumption that Gutefelica was also approving this plan of causing a sham Abyss attack to lure out Lux who was currently a wanted man.

「How strange. I thought that if it is you, you will be able to understand my feeling.」

Gutefelica's shoulders were shaking while chuckling 'ku ku', she glared at Celis with a haughty expression.

「Aren't you sick of it? Days of simply protecting the populace from the Abyss, I'm extremely bored of it. It was even more so since that strategist, one of the Lords, Hayes came.」

She looked up to the sky with a faraway look, and then she slowly put her hand on the handle of her Sword Device.

「When that girl put Gigas under her control, we also had no more need to fight against the Abyss. There was also no chance to wield the power that I trained for several years in order to pay back the debt to the Old Empire. Is there any other story crueler than this?」

「If it's for the sake of satisfying that desire, something like peace is undesirable—you won't even mind to hurt anyone, is that what you think?」

「I heard about the rumor of you even in Heiburg you know? You are piling up Drag-Ride training more than anyone right? Aren't you bored? To be unable to even wield the skill that you had trained—!」

She quickly pulled out her Sword Device while talking and equipped an EX Wyvern with chantless high-speed summoning.

Her palm was tinged with crackling light. She grasped a bizarre long sword.

Most likely it was a type of rare armament that was similar to the Lightning Lance that Celis had.

「Is that so, then I have nothing to say. Someone like you who is drunk on power without knowing the horrors of battle—is not a match for me or him.」

「Want to try? This time the limitation of a mock battle won't get in the way!」

Gutefelica's eyes snapped wide open, at the same time her EX Wyvern rushed.

In order to meet Gutefelica who was leaping forward with explosive momentum, Celis quickly pulled back her lance.

Part 8

Countless sounds of explosion rang out, at the same time there were flashes blinking in the night sky like fireworks.

Flames were rising up here and there due to the Abyss's attack. Amidst that, Lux was hiding inside the hideout mansion along with Airi.

「You mustn't, Nii-san.」

「Yes, I understand—」

Airi grasped the hand of Lux whose expression turned grave every time he heard the sounds and flashes and she warned him.

The positions of the Servants who seemed to be manipulating the Abyss with horn flutes had been determined due to the wide range search by Yoruka's Yato no Kami.

But, even with the girls, their side was still lacking in combat strength.

Philuffy and the Triad should be intercepting the Abyss that were sent to this Triport, even so, as expected Lux couldn't stop feeling uneasy.

「Be patient for a bit more. With Nii-san's stamina right now, you can only use Bahamut for a few minutes. Please only use it to protect yourself.」

「.....But, the enemy's number is more than expected. At this rate, this city will receive enormous damage.」

Of course there was a risk of getting discovered and captured by Heiburg's soldiers, but it couldn't be helped.

Relie and Lord Dist who were in this city might also suffer damage from this.

Lux let out a deep sigh and tightly grasped the handle of his Sword Device, it was then a voice came from outside the mansion.

「Someone! Please help! Lux-san.....!」

「.....-!？」

His name—no, that familiar voice caused Lux to react.

When he quickly opened the curtain and looked below the window, there was the figure of Callesia there. Blood was flowing from her shoulder and she was breathing hard.

—*l|||||-!*
—

The moment Lux got taken aback and held his breath, the horn flute reverberated once more. A winged Abyss—Gargoyle was targeting Callesia.

「This is bad! If I don't get out—!」

Lux shook off Airi's hand that was stopping him and pulled out the Sword Device of Bahamut. At that moment, a voice came from right nearby.

「Yes. Please leave it to me.」

Airi's best friend, one of the Triad, Noct said those words.

Most likely, because she was able to act without standing out using her Drake, she was hiding around here.

But, although the enemy was only a single Gargoyle, as expected the Abyss was powerful.

Putting aside the other members of Syvalles who possessed Divine Drag-Rides, this should be a great burden for Noct who was a user of a general purpose Drag-Ride.

Thinking that, Lux went down to the first floor and opened the door to assist.

Then—,

「GIYAAAH.....！」

He saw the sight of the metallic winged monster fall to the ground with its four limbs severed. It exploded and scattered everywhere.

「Eh—?」

「There is no more reaction of the Abyss in the surroundings. She is also the only human presence in the area. What to do now, Lux-san?」

「Eerr—. Just now, you did that alone Noct?」

「Yes. Under this situation, we cannot spare so many members to guard Lux-san, so depending on the type and number of the Abyss, it's assumed that I will assist in battle rather than fight.」

She spoke that out with a bland tone and calm expression like usual.

It was shocking.

While Lux wasn't looking, the Triad were also doing training. He had heard of that, but for the result to be the capability to defeat a single Gargoyle so easily like this.

「But, it seems that Lux-san, the essential person himself didn't believe in me. Even though I told you to leave it to me, this is extremely disappointing. Haa.....」

Noct spoke in monotone purposefully. Lux got panicked in response to that.

「So, sorry. But, it was amazing. How did you defeat it?」

「No. It's a trade secret. More importantly—」

Noct's gaze turned aside, there he saw the figure of Callesia whose shoulder was injured.

「Callesia-san. That wound, what happened.....?」

The girl lost strength and collapsed on her knees after hearing Lux's question. The glasses girl hung her head down.

And then, she bit her lip in frustration and started talking with pleading eyes.

「Just as you can see, I got counterattacked by Rosa Granhide. There was a hidden escape path in the jail she was imprisoned at—. Most likely after she was rescued by her subordinate, she departed to the New Kingdom.」

「.....-!? Then, what happened tonight is—」

「Yes. If Lady Rosa really came here, it's likely that she is giving command to the Servants. But, this injury of yours.....?」

Airi's muttering was added on by Noct, and she asked.

Then, Callesia embraced her own shoulder and her body trembled fiercely.

「It was Rosa. She is planning to take advantage of this commotion to summon it. The Ragnarok existing in Babel—Metatron.」

「Don't tell me!? They said that they haven't reached the twelfth floor—」

Lux who heard Callesia's story immediately made an alert expression.

But, he noticed that his thinking was overly optimistic and he rethought.

If the Heiburg military whose strings were pulled by Rosa behind the scenes was conquering Babel in order to deal a great blow to the New Kingdom since the beginning, they would easily lie.

Metatron seemed to be an angel type Ragnarok whose existence was described in the ancient document that was obtained from a box inside Babel. No more information than that could be obtained, but it would be dangerous to face it without their full force.

At present, in order to stop the Servants who were in possession of horn flutes, their side's forces were dispersed.

Rosa was planning to liberate the Ragnarok in order to make use of this opening.

「A part of the Heiburg military is advancing until the room where the Ragnarok appears to be at. I'm begging you Lux-san..... before Rosa leaves from the front line base and summons the Ragnarok, please—」

Callesia was pleading with 'haa haa' rough breathing.

Her fingertip was pointing—at the frontline base that was illuminated by watch fire. Around there, a red haired girl wearing military uniform could be seen walking as though she was dragging her body.

There was already no reason to refuse.

At this rate, the New Kingdom, starting from this Triport would get exposed to danger.

「Noct, you go to the city's center. Report this to everyone!」

「Yes, but, right now Lux-san is—」

「That's right! Nii-san too should go together with us. With that body, you won't be able to fight properly—」

「It's fine. I'm also exhausted, but Rosa's wounds are also not something that will heal right away. Even the current me has enough strength left to stop her at least.」

「.....」

Seeing Lux's eyes that were filled with strong will, Airi sighed.

「Please be very careful. I will ask the Triad to be reinforcement immediately. Also—」

「I understand. I won't force myself more than this.」

「Yes. According to my probing device, there is no sign of Abyss or Drag-Rides from here until the frontline base. Be careful.」

Noct used Drake's leap to fly towards the center of the city.

On the other hand, Lux asked Callesia to guide him to Rosa's position.

「Over here. My Sword Device was taken away, so I cannot send you there but.....」

Saying that, Callesia looked at Lux's waist apologetically.

At present even Lux also had the Sword Device of his Wyvern stolen, so he couldn't use it.

It would be just one flight away if he used Bahamut, but he couldn't use it casually if thinking about the battle that might happen.

According to Airi's diagnosis, right now even without Over Limit, Lux wouldn't be able to last three minutes if he operated his Drag-Ride.

Thus, he advanced along with Callesia using their own feet.

At that time, Lux suddenly opened his mouth and talked.

「.....Callesia-san. Did you meet Stefa since then? She wished to meet with you and Rosa all this time.」

「.....No. I don't have any face to meet with her, because all this time I was unable to oppose Rosa and only did exactly as she told me.」

「.....」

「However, we have to stop her for sure this time. Before she releases the Ragnarok and destroys the New Kingdom we—」

「I see.」

Lux was seriously listening to Calensia's words.

However, he whispered with an expression that looked like he was concealing something.

「Then, as I thought it's you. The one who arranged this battle.」

「—Eh?」

Calensia came to a stop with a bewildered expression.

「What are you saying? Right now I'm not accepting Rosa's order anymore! Until now I had no choice but to obey her because of the hostages she kept but—」

「That's not it Calensia. The one who gave the order is the opposite. Thanks to not killing Rosa at that time, thanks to Philuffy who stopped me, I finally realized the truth.」

「What do you.....mean, Nii-san?」

Lux covered the perplexed Airi behind him and pulled out his Sword Device to point it toward Calensia.

A light rain that began to fall drop by drop was gradually increasing in strength.

An even deeper shadow fell on the port city at night due to that, erasing even the expression of the girl before him.

「Thinking back, everything was strange. Why did your cousin Stefa Hersmice live? What's with her crushed eyes? And then, why did you refuse to meet with Stefa? All this time, I thought she was Rosa's hostage to threaten you. But, it's the reverse. You killed the real Calensia and replaced her. At the time when you

all were still military cadets, while no one realized the exact truth—】

「——」

「It was also you who stole my Wyvern's Sword Device. It could easily be done at the moment I lost my consciousness. And then, it should be possible for you to give orders to your subordinates right after that to pin the crime on me. Am I wrong?】

「Ahahahaha】

• Shudder*.

Within her body that melted into darkness, it was only her eyes that were tinged with light.

「Please don't say something strange Lux-san. You saw how I was tormented by her all those times right? Besides, didn't everyone fear Rosa? The people of Heiburg, the soldiers, everyone—】

「Yeah, it was your order to Rosa. You ordered her to do that all this time by threatening the safety of her family and also her friend Stefa so that she can only live by doing evil. It's you who brainwashed Rosa and framed her to be evil, becoming your substitute, the King of Vices of Heiburg. That is your true identity.】

「.....】

「Then, Nii-san got turned into a wanted man even though Lady Rosa was captured, and her escape from inside the prison, all of those were this person's—!?】

Thinking like that, everything became consistent.

How Rosa Granhide intercepted Lux in the underground market with perfect preparation.

How the items obtained from the backroom deal with Dragon Marauder got taken away from the warehouse.

Calensia came into contact with Lux and asked him to save her from Rosa was in order to spy on how he would move.

And then, the moment Rosa who thought that she couldn't lose got defeated, this girl attempted to make him kill Rosa to destroy the evidence while also framing him as an assassin.

「Hmph. I thought that I will be able to easily trick a mere hero-sama who is drunk on exterminating the villain but—」

Calensia smoothly took off her glasses and showed her true nature.

Poisonous eyes that were heavily dyed with cruelty and ruthless hostility.

It was a foreign look that was completely the same like Rosa Granhide who was forced to act evil.

「Hey, Lux-kun. You see, the true villain won't do anything like fighting in the open. Dirtying one's own hand is a dangerous path, so they will make someone else to do it. But that—by no means is wrong or anything you know? Any adult does it without exception. The one who doesn't is just stupid. The one who is made to do it is just an idiot, in other words I'm not bad. Because I'm not bad or anything. No one in Heiburg thinks that I'm bad. I'm a pitiful girl without any sin who is tormented by the evil Rosa. Isn't that right, Lux-kun? If only you stay quiet, I'll keep being clean. In the future forever—see.」

Calensia told him with a coaxing voice and a gruesome smile.

「.....」

Why did she carry out this kind of evil? Lux couldn't imagine it.

The desire for a successful life by climbing up to the top of the world alliance and reaching Avalon.

Of course this girl also had such desire, but Lux noticed something even more repulsive from her.

She would obtain what she wanted, and cast away what she hated. She was also wishing for a distorted pleasure of being treated by her surroundings like a proper person—no, even more than that, like a virtuous person even while amusing herself with her desire to oppress and torment other people.

She wanted to torment and hurt people without dirtying her own hands while she herself kept staying in the position where it was only herself who was

consoled and praised.

That was a 『blackness』 that was even darker than the Old Empire's imperial family and nobles who were carrying out tyranny with the full knowledge of the animosity from the people.

Lux wordlessly pointed the tip of his Sword Device.

『Now then, should we begin Lux-kun? In order to cover up your crime of killing Rosa, you moved to crush Heiburg along with your comrades. I'll have you along with the New Kingdom take responsibility of that crime that turned the world alliance into your enemy.』

The lump of evil that was like mud without bottom.

Callesia who was showing a distorted smile took out a short sword that she was hiding inside her bag.

The moment Lux guessed what that was, he slashed her right arm.

Originally, in this situation it would be faster to aim at her flesh body and subdue her.

But, Callesia wasn't perturbed even when blood was flowing from her arm. She buried that blade shining with seven colors into her chest.

『Elixir!? Did you get it from the transaction with Dragon Marauder!?』

It was already too late when he noticed.

Slowly, the light of seven colors was melting into Callesia's body, a black pattern spread, dyeing her body.

She was transforming into a devil, an existence that transcended a human body. At the same time that thing flew.

『Ushaaah!』

『—Nii-san-!?』

While Airi's scared voice resounded, Lux barely blocked the enemy's first attack.

The knife of Elixir that had finished its role after injecting its medicine collided with Bahamut's Sword Device. It broke into pieces.

「Ku—!？」

The fragment of the blade cut below his right eye. Lux frowned from the pain.

Callesia unsheathed her Sword Device, and she took a thrusting stance aiming at the chest of the faltering Lux.

「Sayonara, evildoer-san.」

At that time when Callesia opened her eyes that were dyed crimson and laughed, her body was punched and blown aside.

「.....-!？」

The moment everyone there held their breath, a chain crossed in front of Lux's eyes.

「Phi-chan!？」

When Lux raised his voice and turned around, he found the answer there.

Philuffy who was wearing her Divine Drag-Ride Typhon sent her Pile Anchor flying and blocked Callesia's violent attack.

「Lu-chan, go to Rosa. Everyone should catch up soon too so—」

「But.....!？」

The moment Lux said that in hesitation, the anchor's tip dug into Callesia's body and pulled her closer with intense speed.

Using Typhon's forte, its hand-to-hand combat ability, Philuffy's fist was going to shot out after pulling the enemy closer, but at that moment the restriction was unfastened.

「—!？」

「Ahaa」

Callesia using her Sword Device to cut her own uniform that was bitten by the anchor's tip and escaped, at the same time she twirled midair and recovered her balance.

Using the opening when Philuffy blinked in surprise, Callesia pushed the grip of her Sword Device.

「Come, Alklha!」

Right after that, intense light particles whirled and an armor with luster that was like rust appeared.

It had a hardy huge body to the degree it buried the user's body into the armor, and huge double-jointed armored arms.

The Divine Drag-Ride that was like a fortress itself was wrapping around Callesia.

Four arms were growing from its torso and both shoulders. One of it was equipped with a huge cannon that was almost the same size as Lisha's Seven Heads.

「This is—this shape, don't tell me.....！」

「Divine Drag-Ride Alklha—aren't you lucky? To be able to make a memory before dying.」

One of the Servants, the Hunting Punishment Gerdaf who Lux fought at the end of the campus festival. He was destroyed by a Drag-Ride with the same form as this.

In other words, the Divine Raiment of Rosa's Gorynych that could change shape was also nothing more than a cover so that Callesia's true identity wouldn't be exposed.

「This Drag-Ride is really powerful, but its flaw is its drastic energy consumption you seee. However it's fine—due to the Baptism, right now I'm receiving Elixir's protection.....」
[Black Wing Ruin
Dark Fall-!]」

「.....Kuh!?」

Lux also tried to join the fight at first, but the moment he readied Bahamut, something strange happened.

- Butsun* All light vanished from the surroundings, everything was closed into darkness.

「This is!? Just what is—!?」

It wasn't that all the light remaining in the city was erased.

The figure of Airi at his side, the sensation of the Sword Device he was holding—and even the coldness of the rain couldn't be felt.

Lux's five senses themselves were erased.

(Then, is this Alklha's Divine Raiment!?)

It created a barrier with a radius of several dozen ml with itself as the center, which sealed the five senses of the living thing inside it.

A true darkness that severed the world and cognizance.

Lux noticed just how completely terrifying this ability was.

No matter how many countermeasures he prepared, he wouldn't be able to move if he couldn't stay cognizant.

By the point of time he got hit with this ability as the first move, it would be a checkmate if he wasn't wearing a Drag-Ride.

At that moment when the despair of not being able to do anything crossed Lux's mind, the darkness was removed along with Philuffy's voice.

「—Missing Faith」

The darkness dispersed along with a surge of nothingness. The night recovered its appearance.

Right after the flash of thunderbolt that illuminated the surrounding, the anchors that were fired from every part of Typhon wrapped around Alklha and sealed its movement.

「Hee, that's a great response there. Well, you have no other method to defend against this anyway.」

Callesia wasn't really perturbed. It seemed she had also finished investigating Typhon's Divine Raiment.

In contrast, Philuffy was facing the enemy in front of her with an unusually grave expression.

「Lu-chan, go ahead. I'll manage here somehow.」

「But—」

Lux felt uneasy seeing the shining golden Abyss eyes Philuffy displayed.

Philuffy couldn't activate Typhon's Divine Raiment without turning her body into an Abyss.

She was training to obtain resistance by making Airi blow the horn flute, but if she forced herself to fight, it would become a burden on her body and her heart might be taken over by Abyss.

「We can only, leave this to her.」

Airi lightly pulled on Lux's sleeve with a bitter expression.

「If Alkha's Divine Raiment is an ability to erase the opponent's five senses, then it's only Philuffy-san who can oppose her with her ability to negate Divine Raiments. We should leave this to her and chase after Lady Rosa.」

Rosa was most likely trying to open Babel's door in order to fulfill Callesia's order for her.

If they didn't stop that, the Ragnarok of Babel, Metatron would appear and Lux and the others might get annihilated due to a pincer attack.

At the very least, Rosa who was heading to Babel right now shouldn't have any spare strength left to fight properly.

Then—,

「Phi-chan! I will stop her right away and come back to help! That's why—!」

「Yes..... see you, Lu-chan.」

Her eyes were colored pitch black with golden light residing in them, even so Philuffy was smiling with her usual tone.

And then, she faced Callesia and Alkha who was standing in her way and she swung up Typhon's fist.

—

「Haa, haa.....!」

After receiving the last command from Heiburg's King of Vices—Callesia, Rosa Granhide dragged her body and aimed towards Babel.

Because the position where the Ragnarok existed had been discovered, a crack was made beforehand on the external wall of that position.

If that crack was aimed with a long range sniping rifle and the wall was destroyed, the Ragnarok would awaken and get outside.

After that Rosa just needed to leave from this place.

With that, all of her tasks would be finished.

If it was Callesia who saved her from the torture of the man in the military, this time she would also save her again.

Her body felt so much pain that she wanted to faint right away already, but there was no way she could stop.

「Rosa! Wait!」

「-.....!?」

When she heard Lux's voice from behind, the red haired girl tensed herself in panic.

She had done terrible things to him.

That was why, she would be killed for sure if she was caught this time.

Unless she escaped—

Unless she escaped and obeyed the King of Vices, unless she perpetrated evil and subdued other people.

It was as though something stirred her up and she mustered her last strength, but then a Drag-Ride stood in her way.

「Ah—」

When she looked above her, she saw a familiar man wearing a Wyrm.

One of the Servants, the Cutting Punishment Brandish. That man lifted up his Blade and took a stance to cut her down.

「Why are, you here.....」

「You didn't notice? That might be so huuuh. Do you think you can destroy even a part of that Babel's outer wall with your strength right now?」

The emaciated man looked down on Rosa with vaguely empty eyes and calmly told her.

「We will be troubled even if you stay alive longer than this. Your last role after you cannot fight properly anymore is—to become a bait here and die. That is the order of our master.」

「You, lie.....right? Because, I still—!？」

Rosa had already noticed, that the King of Vices had abandoned her, and also that this conclusion was inevitable.

Rosa who despaired towards everything closed her eyes, but.

At that time someone crossed before her eyes.

「—GYAAAAH!」

Brandish's hoarse scream resounded. The emaciated man fell prostrated on the ground.

When she noticed, in front of her a young man with androgynous look and distinctive braided hair—Coral who was wearing an EX Wyvern was standing.

「You, are.....?」

「It looks like I made it in time, I'm glad. Just now, when I went to Lux-kun, he said that he wanted me to save you.」

「Why, those people are—.....」

She had trapped Lux and his comrades, and hurt them. And now he asked someone to save her? Rosa murmured with an uncomprehending expression.

「Who knows, even I don't really get it, which is stronger, evil or justice. But—」

Pausing like that, Coral took Rosa's hand and continued with a gentle smile.

「Lux-kun trying to persist with his own justice is surely also not an easy path. If it's you who had to do evil against your wishes, don't you understand his feelings?」

「I, am—」

With that sentence, Rosa's mask crumbled down into pieces.

What could be seen there, was the unpainted face of a weak girl who had falsified everything until now, in order to protect herself and her friend.

Part 9

「Haa, haa.....! You were giving me a hard time for a mere small fry, this damn meatball.」

Lisha who was battling on the wharf west of Triport was looking down on the man who lost consciousness in front of her.

One of the Servants, Goldia who was driving an EX Wyrm was a formidable enemy.

Originally, Tiamat that specialized in long range attacks should have an overwhelming advantage, but in order to not give the opponent a chance to play the flute, Lisha had to constantly take the initiative to attack.

And then, although right now there were almost no people around, but Lisha acted considerately that she must not involve the houses and ships into the destruction. That was the cause of her hard fight.

Especially the opponent's skill in manipulating his huge iron ball was amazing. It caused Lisha to meet unfavorable situations several times.

But, in the end the strength that Lisha had accumulated until now came out on top.

Her new technique that was the result from her developing her unique talent that was Drag-Ride development became the deciding factor and she splendidly wrested away victory.

「However, as expected this is tiring. I poured my effort into development until now, but I have to increase my stamina from here on too, if not—」

Lisha dispelled her armor while mumbling to herself. She returned the two Sword Devices she used back into their sheath.

There were three sword belts wrapped around her waist, and one more on her back. It was an appearance that was normally impossible.

「Hmm. So that's your new trump card, that's quite something isn't it?」

「.....-!? Wait, what are you coming here for Krulcifer! Go search for other enemies right away!」

Seeing Fafnir show up above the wharf, Lisha reflexively raised her voice.

「That's a really terrible remark. My opponent was so dangerous that I had to use my full power—the Full Connect, that's why I was worried about you and came here as reinforcement.」

「No need. Don't think that it's only you who has increased your skills.」

Lisha acted strong and crossed her arms in response to Krulcifer's words that sounded mischievous.

「My, then you will depart from here right away without rest then? It looks like they have defeated most of the Abyss though. And I'm also worried about Lux-kun.」

「What?」

Lisha equipped her Tiamat once more and headed to the east together with Krulcifer. There, they found two Servants that had already been defeated, and the figures of Yoruka and Celis hunting down the remaining Abyss that were summoned to the city center.

「Those two, are they monsters.....?」

Lisha murmured with a dumbfounded tone, but Krulcifer shook her head silently.

「That's not true. There is no doubt that their fundamental strength is out of bound. But—the enemy should be considerably atrocious too.」

「-.....!?」

When Lisha focused her gaze really carefully, she could see traces of fierce battle on the two even from afar.

Break Purge, a technique to take off a part of the armor to create a spec that was focused to breaking through a single point by sacrificing the Drag-Ride's multifunction. A technique that was a double-edged sword.

For Celis to use that technique, the situation must have been that serious to corner her like that—

「Hm? What, Yoruka is also somewhat strange. The whole frame of Yato no Kami, it looks somewhat distorted—」

「It's amazing that you can understand that much even from this distance..... Although I've seen your mania attitude every time, but it's still amazing to behold.」

「That's not it! That's, there is a proper reason for this. It's because recently I have often given maintenance to that ero woman's Drag-Ride too.」

「Is that so?」

Krulcifer unusually showed a shocked face and asked.

「Yeah, because since she left from Hayes's place, there was no proper mechanic to take a look at her Drag-Ride. That girl's Drag-Ride is a special make after all, so it's hard to repair—」

「Good grief someone like you, it's really a waste, in various things—」

「It's none of your business-!?」

Seeing Krulcifer staring still at her while holding her head, Lisha spontaneously snapped at her.

But, seeing the citizens who were being chased by the Abyss, they quickly matched their rhythm with each other.

「There-! Follow me Krulcifer!」

Lisha held back two Chimeras that were chasing after a man who looked like a merchant, then Fafnir's freezing bullet sealed their movement at that chance.

But, faster than Lisha could do a follow up attack, a Drag-Ride's silhouette rushed vertically.

「You are late, Lizsharte.」

「Yes, with this—it's the last.」

Celis's Lindwurm pierced through the core of one Chimera with its lance, while the Blade that Yoruka wielded bisected the other one.

Lisha whose eyes were stolen by their striking movements pouted her lips sharply.

「Don't snatch other people's prey as you please! Besides, it was me who repaired your Drag-Ride!」

「Yes. I'm grateful about that, that's why, I offered my help just now.」

Seeing Yoruka who was smiling carefreely, Lisha became at a loss for words.

「More importantly, let's go quickly. I'm worried about Lux-kun.」

「That's right. Philuffy returned to guard him, but there is still the matter of thd Ragnarok too.」

Celis said that and glared towards Babel, it was at that timing her eyes snapped open wide in surprise.

「That's—!?」

After her, Lisha looked at the faraway residential area and turned speechless.

Right now the townscape had few lighting, but in that area, there was a black curtain in half-spherical shape covering it.

It was unclear whether it was a Ragnarok or the ability of the enemy's Divine Drag-Ride, but in any case Lux was in danger—

Thinking that, everyone gathered their strength to dash there. But then a voice came suddenly from behind.

「Ku-ku-ku-ku, I'm filled with awe. To think that you all really have strength that surpassed us.」

It was Gutefelica who had been confirmed as one of the Servants.

Her unruly hair that twisted frizzily like flame was hanging down while she laughed.

But, even seen from the side, her body was already at its limit.

The EX Wyvern she was wearing also had its armor and armaments broken already. Seeing her figure with blood spewing out from her mouth, she was clearly unable to fight no matter how anyone looked.

「It's splendid, really something. Strangely my wish came true. The strength that I obtained in order to crush you people of New Kingdom didn't reach as expected. And then—I also protected my honor as a soldier.」

While she continued to mutter with an empty expression, a part of her words caused Lisha to frown.

「.....What did you say?」

「I'm saying that you all got caught into my master's plan.....! A Ragnarok is the same as any other Abyss, when it sees other living things—it will become active and move. If only the curtain of my master's Alklha is lifted up and she showed her figure, it has been arranged so that it can fight anytime.....! Now, come! The protector of the throne nesting in Babel!」

Instantly, the wall of Babel's upper floor that existed far away at the other side of the city was broken down along with a thunderous sound.

At the same time, Gutefelica flew above. And then her body was smashed by a streak of light.

「—Ku, they destroyed the wall around the top floor of Babel and exposed the outside world to the inside!?」

Lisha who instinctually guessed the situation spontaneously yelled after seeing the remains of the broken EX Wyvern.

「And then, she flew until the height where the Ragnarok's eyes could reach, and turned herself into a bait.....is that what happened?」

「Just what could she be thinking, the so called master of that woman.」

Cold sweat was emerging on Krulcifer's forehead, and color was also leaving Celis's face.

「There is no time for small talk—it's coming.」

But, Yoruka's voice that was the same like usual made everyone recover their calm.

At that moment, Lisha strongly breathed out and lifted up her Sword Device for encouragement.

「Everyone, don't let the enemy approach Lux and the airhead girl! We are going to finish off that wannabe angel with the four of us!」

The remaining three nodded at Lisha's instruction, at the same time, a gigantic spherical body with more than thirty wings growing was approaching Triport.

The red eyes that were packed full on its surface opened, catching sight of the four who were taking position above the frontline base.

They began their battle against Metatron while feeling a nervousness that they had never experienced before.

Part 10

「Were we too late!? That Abyss with wings, is Metatron—!?’」

Lux discovered Rosa while heading towards Babel and asked Coral to protect her, but, the Ragnarok was easily liberated. Was there another enemy hiding in ambush somewhere else?

But, when he was going to pursue the Ragnarok for the time being, the Triad who had just returned called out to him.

「Wait Lux-kun. You are already exhausted, it’s an order from Lord Dist, that you must not use Bahamut until the very last minute.」

「Yes. The remaining Servants were already defeated by Lisha-sama and the others. Leave the Ragnarok to the four of them—」

「We are going to reinforce Philuffy!」

Saying that, Tillfur approached, but she immediately hesitated and the Wyrm she was wearing stopped moving.

「Wait, this, what is going on—!?’」

Sweat was flowing down from her forehead with twitching expression on her face.

Callesia had turned into a devil using Elixir. She controlled Alklha using a bottomless life force.

Her four huge arms were attacking Philuffy one after another. The stone paving, stone wall, houses behind Philuffy, they were all destroyed with one hit.

But, even in front of that fierce and brutal attacks, Philuffy didn’t loosen Pile Anchors restriction around the enemy.

It should be disadvantageous for her facing Alklha which was a giant land battle type Drag-Ride because she would get pulled towards the enemy, but,

「Alklha's Divine Raiment can steal the five senses of all living things within the area a few dozen ml from it. In order to respond right after the enemy uses it, she has to constantly stay in contact with the enemy's body like that despite the danger.」

「Then, isn't Philuffy actually in even more danger!? But—」

They couldn't get near.

It wasn't just because the Triad's strength simply couldn't reach, because of the situation where both sides were mutually doing offense and defense in super close range, they couldn't interfere.

If they got close half-bakedly, they would become a hindrance or perhaps get dragged into it.

With that prospect, the Triad couldn't approach near.

「Yes. We too have become stronger more or less, but as expected, the two of them are on a different level. Then—I judged that we shouldn't put on an air needlessly and do what we can do with our all.」

「.....Guess so. Looks like it's still not yet the time to show off our new technique.」

Tillfur nodded looking somewhat fretful. Noct's Drake stretched out a cord towards her Wyrm and connected.

「Lux-kun, you stay behind me.」

「.....」

But, Lux himself couldn't stay quiet.

A hundred ml from him, Callesia and Philuffy were displaying a gruesome mortal combat.

「You are working really hard. But—I wonder what you will do against this? ^{Sun Ea} Sol Tooth!」

「.....-!？」

Philuffy continued to endure even with four arms raining down fists consecutively from very close range. In response, Callesia fired countless shells

from the backpack loaded on Alklha's back.

「That's light bullet!? Or else, what are they doing above—!?’

Tillfur looked up to the sky with a dubious face, right after that, Alklha's armor shined mysteriously.

The Divine Raiment that stole cognizance from other people—for some reason it wasn't unleashed towards Philuffy, but towards the cloudy sky.

「Firing to wrong direction..... what is she planning!?’

Sharis muttered in bewilderment. Immediately after, Lux noticed Calensia's aim.

「Phi-chan, be careful! The shells just now are falling!」

Right after that, from inside the curtain of black barrier that was hiding everything within it, missiles with various trajectories were falling towards Philuffy.

「——」

Philuffy immediately entered a defensive stance by fully deploying Typhon's barrier, but she couldn't fully defend against everything.

Her balance crumbled from the rain of shells showering her. The next moment, Alklha's giant arms came striking,

「U, ku.....」

Philuffy was blown away. She closed one of her eyes and endured the impact that penetrated through her whole body.

But, even so she didn't falter and skated forward, but this time she was fully hit by a blow from Alklha that came from the side.

「Why!? It's different from before, now it's only the enemy's attack that is landing!?’

Tillfur who was baffled took the stance of charging ahead with her armament, a hammer in hand.

Then, Airi spoke her own hypothesis with a subdued tone.

「I think, perhaps, things that enter the curtain of darkness that the Divine Drag-Ride Alklha deployed won't be able to be perceived by other people. She is deploying that curtain behind and to the left and right is in order to hide her own attack.」

「So that means—it will be unknown where the attack is going to come from until just before it hits you?」

「We cannot just watch like this. I'll also help, Philuffy!」

Aiming at the timing where a distance was opened between Callesia and Philuffy, Tillfur rushed her Wyrm towards Callesia.

But,

「This monster too won't be able to rest in peace huh, even though she had been working hard to cover for you weaklings, but you actually came rushing in by yourself.」

「.....-!？」

The moment Alklha's Divine Raiment, the Dark Fall entangled around Tillfur, she lost control and tumbled down.

Without stopping she moved towards the nearby wall and crashed.

「No, way.....!？」

「So it's impossible as expected.」

Even though Lux was sweating nervously, he accepted the situation calmly.

Drag-Ride realized a tremendous mobility due to the power of its Force Core and various parts of the frame, but the moment Alklha's Dark Fall entered, even the cognizance to perform that control was taken away.

Not only did the opponent become unable to see their self and the enemy, even the sensation of holding the control stick for the body control manipulation was erased, that was why they became unable to even understand what they were doing themselves and couldn't fight.

In other words, other than Philuffy's Typhon that possessed the Divine Raiment to erase other Divine Raiments, they couldn't fight properly other than

using long range attacks.

However, even that Missing Faith that was the last ray of hope would become a burden to the body, so it couldn't be used that often.

Alklha's preliminary movement when attacking was erased from view, its cannon shells and blow couldn't be dodged, the armor of Typhon was gradually breaking and torn off.

In less than a minute, the battle situation was turning for the worse in the blink of an eye.

「Haa, haa.....!」

Philuffy's breathing was gradually getting harder, the sweat trickling from her was sticking on her front hair.

She was starting to show the omen of her limit approaching, just like what she showed at the campus selection battle.

「Phi-chan, run away! I'll fight her with Bahamut next!」

When Lux spontaneously yelled, Philuffy stopped him with Typhon's hand gesture.

「I'm all right. I, can still go on.」

She told him that with gasping breath and continued to endure Alklha's fists.

「How foolish. And then, how pitiful. You are resisting like this even though you have no chance of victory. Are you trying to become a sacrificial pawn of the New Kingdom?」

「-.....」

Lux who heard Callesia's mocking strongly clenched his fist.

But, even so Philuffy wasn't shaken.

「Or perhaps, you are drunk with heroism because you have met that kind of experience? You can feel at ease without despairing if you are at least useful for someone else—, but you see. That is a weakness.」

「.....」

「What they call goodness, is the last place to escape for living things who cannot make others recognize their existence and unable to seize a position for themselves. They are living things lower than livestock, trying to obtain favor only by following what others told them to do and pile up good deeds. There is no way someone like that can win against me—this『evil』me, the one who is truly powerful, that's including the Black Hero over there!」

Alklha's offensive was increasing in momentum even more, but Philuffy was avoiding direct hits with her body handling while gradually closing the distance.

「That's—wrong. At the very least, Lu-chan is different.」

Her eyes were dyed black. Her figure was turning into something that gave off the scent of an Abyss in part.

Even so she was rebutting indifferently with the usual expression and tone of Philuffy.

「You are just averting your eyes from inconvenient things. I know, that saving without hurting someone, is far more painful than simply saving by hurting other people, that's why—」

- Dokun*, Lux who was listening to those words felt a warm feeling filling his chest.

This childhood friend who was kind through thick and thin was looking at the worried, anguished, and hesitating Lux, even more than he himself.

Just like when he first met Philuffy, when she noticed how he was covering for her and accepted the blame himself.

「Lu-chan was trying to save Rosa and the people of Heiburg, even if he has to get hurt in their place. I, like such kind Lu-chan. That's why, I won't let him get hurt for more than this. I swear I'll—protect Lu-chan」

「Empty prattle! This monster pretending to be a saiiint!」

The will of Philuffy that wouldn't waver and break no matter what.

Calensia was enraged by those words and she finally took a stance with an arm—the one that was holding the enormous cannon called ^{Moon Eater} Luna Tooth to

thrust it forward.

She was planning to decide the battle using the armament of one hit sure kill that evaporated Gerdaf's EX Wyvern completely.

No matter how solid Typhon's armor was, it wouldn't be able to endure that main cannon.

Lux's hand instantly reached to his Sword Device. In that instant, the whole area was covered by a black curtain.

「Ku.....!」

Due to Alklha's Divine Raiment, Dark Fall that manifested once more, all cognizance was erased.

But, this time the black curtain was dispelled without waiting for the cancellation by Philuffy's Missing Faith—the sensation of net wrapping around him, Airi, and the Triad altogether bewildered Lux.

「This is—iron net!?」

「But, why is it aiming at us rather than Philuffy-san—」

「This is bad, in this situation, we cannot get away immediately!」

While Airi was perplexed, Sharis who was wearing her Wyvern said that.

Right after that, Callesia and Alklha that had switched positions from before was aiming their huge cannon towards Philuffy.

No, Philuffy was standing at the front, while Lux and others who were entangled inside a net were behind her. Callesia had made this situation and started charging energy into Luna Tooth.

「If you can escape by abandoning the comrades behind, you, just try it. A monster like you hiding in human skin, I'll tear off that mask right here.」

「.....-!?」

Callesia made a cold smile that was like a demon and provoked Philuffy.

But, this was an obvious trap.

The cannon attack from that Luna Tooth couldn't be defended with the

current half-broken Typhon.

By making Philuffy and Lux stand in a straight line, she was planning to deal with them with one attack.

In response, Philuffy didn't move and deployed her barrier dozens of ml ahead of Lux and the others.

She was intending to accept the attack right from the front to protect Lux and the others until the end.

「Phi-chan, run away! Defeat Callesia before she can—」

Lux reflexively yelled while holding Airi's shoulder.

But, Philuffy kept glaring forward without turning around and she told—only a sentence.

「It's fine, because.....I won't let her hurt anyone else anymore.」

It was her dreamy tone that was the same as usual.

However, Lux held his breath toward her resolve that was filled with a powerful will.

「Is that so, then I'll send you all off to heaven happily—sayonara.」

Callesia who was baring a wicked smile like a demon fired the energy of Luna Tooth.

A thick beam of light completely covered the surrounding.

The torrent of intense high heat and impact was fired in a wave motion.

Part 11

Above an empty residential area, four Divine Drag-Rides were dancing.

A Ragnarok of spherical shape with countless eyeballs and pairs of wings.

Considering the immortal Poseidon and Yggdrasil that could resurrect and grow by obtaining resistance respectively, it wasn't difficult to imagine that this Metatron must be hiding some kind of special ability too.

In contrast, although the four of them had gotten stronger, right now each of them was exhausted.

Therefore, if they were trying to defeat it here, they had not many options and time left.

Lisha who was taking command of this battle first faced the other three and gave instructions using Dragon Voice.

『We'll surround it from four directions and attack, the moment the enemy advances to the plaza, I'll bring it down to the ground!』

『—Roger』

『Acknowledged.』

『Understood.』

Krulcifer, Celis, and even Yoruka responded to her voice.

In order to protect the exhausted Lux, it was necessary to exterminate the Ragnarok in this place.

And then, even without expressly giving a detailed explanation, everyone there understood the best action to take.

First everyone readied their weapons and surrounded it from four directions, holding it back.

But, Metatron didn't show any reaction in respond and advanced forward towards Lisha.

「Here I go monster eyeball! Prostrate under god's name! Suppressor!」

The moment Metatron's giant body came right above the plaza, Lisha activated Tiamat's Divine Raiment—gravity control.

Gravity burden was applied on the Ragnarok's whole body. The plan was to strike down that body and pasted it on the ground, but—

「.....What-!?」

「—iiIIIIil」

Just when it let out a faint cry, right after that the gravity field covering Metatron was erased. Right after that—Lisha and the others who were surrounding it from four directions were covered with light that struck them down to the ground all at once.

「This is—!? Don't tell me!?」

「Tiamat's Divine Raiment!? Then—!」

Even while receiving a burden from gravity, Celis fired out a lightning attack from the tip of her lance.

The lightning's tip from the Lightning Flash was erased as expected before it could reach Metatron. The attack recoiled back to everyone.

「U, aaah.....!?」

The power of lightning attack that was transmitted to the whole body caused the four to scream.

「As expected it's like that, this Ragnarok absorbed our attacks and reflected it back.....!」

Krulcifer gritted her teeth and glared at Metatron above.

But, Celis shook her head slightly and denied that.

「It's not just simple reflection. At the very least the strength is magnified by several fold! If we aren't careful, we will get wiped out!」

「Then—, I also need to test it.」

The moment the gravity field and the lightning attack's discharge cut off, Yoruka drove her Yato no Kami and danced in the air.

The back of her Drag-Ride's four legs released wind and heat. It was the special armament ^{Vacuum Step} Karafumi to kick on the air. By using it to leap up, even though her Drag-Ride was a special equipment type, she was able to approach Metatron in the sky.

But—when the giant eyeballs covering its surface were fully opened, a flash of high heat surged.

「—Yoruka-!？」

Lisha deployed her defensive barrier while yelling.

But, before Yoruka got hit by the enemy's attack, she finished an action using her katana-type Blade.

The slash with super speed that was only for one action by using Quick Draw.

The slash ran on the surface of Metatron and carved a line on it.

「—That girl, what is in her mind? To purposefully wait until the enemy moved like that.....！」

In order to aim for a counter, she intentionally let herself get hit to attack at the risk of her own life.

But, even that line from the slash vanished and then it unleashed shockwaves consecutively to the surrounding.

「Even physical attacks, are reflected.....!？」

The attack Yoruka unleashed was scattered back with several times the power. Countless cracks ran through the houses and stone paving.

Although Yoruka dodged the enemy's heat ray and reflected attack to the minimum, as expected even Yoruka's armor got damaged.

「This Ragnarok, it's really beyond our means isn't it—」

「Ku.....!？」

Yoruka's composed smile still hadn't crumbled, but beside her Lisha was gritting her teeth.

Even with four Divine Drag-Ride users gathered here, they had nothing that could be done this quickly.

Whether it was a physical attack, or shockwave, or lightning attack—if every kind of attack was magnified and reflected back, then they had no way to fight back at all.

Furthermore because Metatron itself was slowly moving like a balloon, they also couldn't use its own strength to hurt it.

「It will be better if I don't fire my Freezing Cannon. We will get wiped out if we get smashed while frozen.

For Krulcifer to only be able to make that kind of frivolous talk even after using Fafnir's future prediction, it gave them a hint just how despairing the situation was.

Because in other words, with their battle strength right now, no matter how they struggle there was no future where their attacks would go through that could be predicted.

「——」

After Metatron cried with a strange voice, it started to advance towards the residential area where Lux and the others were at.

At that moment, the injured Yoruka kicked on empty air once more and leaped.

「—？」

Lisha, Krulcifer, Celis, the three of them held their breath seeing that.

This time Yoruka unleashed multiple slashes consecutively, but as expected they were reflected the same.

「What are you doing ero woman! It's pointless even if we attack this thing!
We are only going to get hit back!」

「My? We won't know that unless we try it.」

An absolute difference in battle potential.

Yato no Kami's Divine Raiment, the Spell Code wouldn't work on Metatron that wasn't a Drag-Ride.

Even so Yoruka repeated various attacks as though she had no fear and hesitation at all.

『You—, don't tell me』

『Aah, it's fine if everyone got away from here. This is only something that I'm doing willfully.』

Yoruka calmly answered the question Lisha sent through Dragon Voice.

『There is no way I can let this enemy go to where Aruji-sama is at while we still don't understand its weakness. Even if this body will break at the end of this, if I don't even search around for some kind of impetus to be able to damage it, there won't be any meaning for a tool like me to exist.』

『.....-!?』

Lisha reflexively held her breath hearing Yoruka saying those words as though it was only natural.

Realizing the conviction of this girl called Yoruka, her expression changed.

『It will be pointless even if you stop me as commander, I'm—』

「Don't speak selfishly you damn idiot-！」

「Eh—!?」

The moment Yoruka tilted her head, twelve Legions pierced Metatron's eyeballs.

But, as expected the attack was amplified and reflected back, blowing away the approaching Lisha.

「What are you intending to do? This experiment can be done by me alone.」

「Annoying, shut up! No matter what you are trying to do it's just selfish! Do you think that your strength won't be necessary for Lux's sake from here on!?」

「.....」

Hearing Lisha's caustic words that sounded like an angry roar caused Yoruka's eyes to open wide.

As though to continue after Lisha, Krulcifer sniped using a normal bullet, while Celis used Divine Gate and unleashed a simultaneous attack at two spots. Those attacks were similarly reflected and they received damage.

「As expected this enemy isn't simple, but—with our attack hitting it, its attention is directed to us. It will aim at us as long as we don't escape.」

「Yes, we also approve your gamble. If you are searching for weakness, it should be done with everyone using various methods.」

「——」

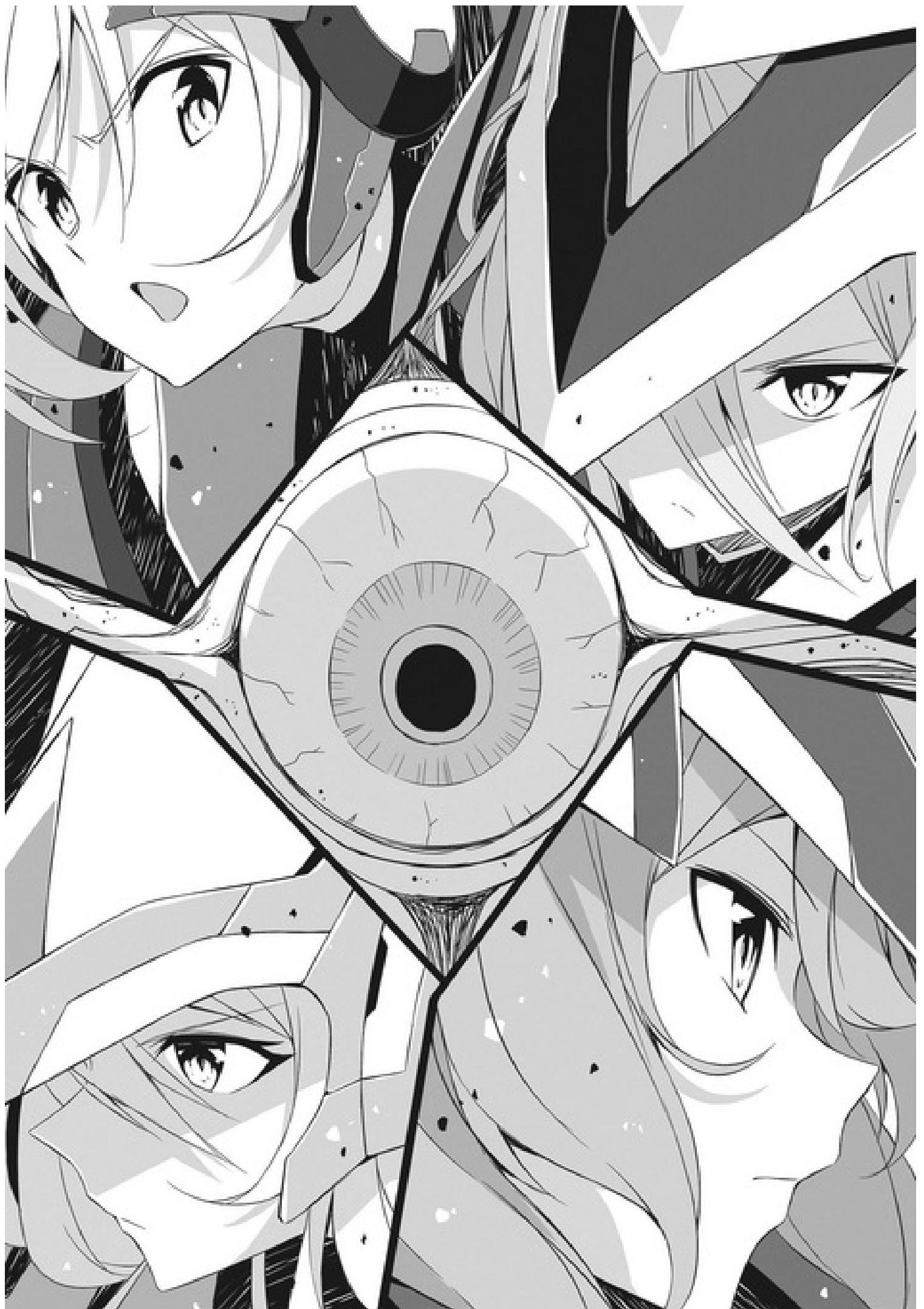
It seemed that it was too unexpected for Yoruka. She was dazed for a while hearing their words, but hearing Lisha's supporting words, her smile returned.

「That's how it is. We cannot let this thing go to Lux's position while we still haven't found the method to oppose it. That's why, you too cooperate and fight with us. This isn't something for you to shoulder alone!」

Lisha's breathing was rough from her approaching her limit, even so seeing how she kept acting strong, Yoruka smiled.

「—I understand. Lizsharte-san.」

Lisha was bewildered how the smile Yoruka was wearing was different from until just now while rushing towards the Ragnarok once more.



The opposition resumed by the girls' unity.

Part 12

「-.....!」

After the storm of an instant where they couldn't even breathe passed through, they opened their eyes—and over there was.

「Ho, how-!? How can you endure through the bombing by Luna Tooth just now-!? No—」

The devil was shocked seeing Typhon that was smoking black from its whole body.

Philuffy wasn't simply enduring through the attack.

The reason the half broken Typhon was able to hold back that fierce bombing was before their eyes in a clear shape.

「That's, don't tell me—!?」

「Is that, what Saniya and the others used.....!?」

「Yes. Is something like this, possible?」

Sharis, Tillfur, and Noct were staring in amazement at that figure.

The root of Abyss growing from Philuffy's back entangled on Typhon's armor, transforming that appearance.

The new form of Typhon with the dark red pulsing root entangling it.

It was a sight that even Lux had remembrance of from his battle with Saniya.

Using a part of Yggdrasil's special characteristic that could invade and fuse with even inorganic matter, not just one's body, even the Drag-Ride one was wearing would transform.

「B-blood Typhon.....is it? But, that form is—」

Originally, maintaining her sanity while displaying Yggdrasil's power that was

putting burden on her should be an act that was next to impossible.

He had to assist her as soon as possible, that was what Lux thought. But the moment he slipped out of the net, Philuffy was moving.

「Wha-, what the hell-!? That figure—!」

「Surely, I still cannot go to heaven or anywhere yet.」

Philuffy had unleashed Yggdrasil's power, even so she asserted with her usual calm tone.

At the same time the countless Pile Anchors she fired entwined around Alklha and pulled.

The giant armor that should be two sizes bigger than Typhon was gradually getting dragged closer, and before long it floated in the air and got pulled.

Perhaps due to the strengthening ability of Yggdrasil, even the anchors' strength was increasing. The pulling was accelerating with a speed that even the eyes couldn't follow.

[File:SaijakuBahamut](#)

[v10 10.png](#)

「Why! Why would you go that far until turning into something like that even after receiving human's malice with that body—!?」

「Because Lu-chan said, that he wants even me like this to stay at his side.」

The Alklha that was approaching before her eyes along with a shriek was kicked up by B-blood Typhon to right above.

Due to the sudden strike to high above after getting moved in high speed horizontally, the crumbling pieces of that armor fluttered in the sky.

「.....THAT'S, IMPOSSIBLEeEEEE-!」

Blood vomit scattered from that mouth. Those crimson eyes were opened wide until the limit and she yelled.

She who was charmed by the path of evil and persisted in it—as though opposing her fate.

But, even after getting kicked flying to far above, the binding of the anchors

was still holding strong.

Typhon's both arms grabbed those wires, and then as though swinging down a sword from right above the head to straight below, the restrained Alkha was thrown to an empty ground.

「GAGAAaAAA!」

Receiving the throw that was utilizing centrifugal force while being restrained, that armor which looked like an evil fortress was smashed apart into pieces.

Because of the devil transformation from the Elixir's effect, Callesia avoided instant death, although her movement was completely stopped with all the broken bones in her body.

「Phi-chan!?」

Lux who slipped through the iron net rushed forward, at the same time Airi blew the horn flute she was carrying in hiding.

The command that she made towards Abyss was inaction.

Right after she made that command, Yggdrasil's root pulled back and even Typhon was dispelled.

「We had tested it before once due to Philuffy-san's request. Though even using the horn flute's support, the burden on the body is too much—」

「Nn, I'm glad.....」

The darkness in Philuffy's eyes was vanishing, her face was returning to her usual look.

But, it appeared she had already used up even the strength to stand up. She was about to crumble down when Lux caught her in his arms.

「Why, did you do something so reckless.....! If something happened—」

「It's fine, you know?」

Philuffy's voice was frail, even so she showed him a smile.

「Because, I still want to stay at Lu-chan's side, so, I won't disappear—」

「.....」

The feeling of Philuffy who said that to him struck Lux's chest and he embraced her tightly.

Then, the devil who was lying down nearby laughed 'ku-ku' with a trembling throat.

Her flesh didn't start regenerating.

Her heart that had its reasoning melted by Elixir surpassed the limit of her own life force and perished.

He didn't know whether she was tricked by Dragon Marauder or if she personally committed a blunder, but that body was burning out like ash, she was starting to crumble from her feet.

「Ha, hahahaha, kukukukuku.....!」

Yet even so, the King of Vices was sneering seeing the two of them.

「You fools are carrying out a pointless struggle..... Even if you defeat me, your wish won't come true. Evil is growing more severe under the shadow of goodness that you idiots are risking your life to do. Even if you expect some kind of reward, even if you expect to be praised, you will be able to obtain that only for a moment—」

Her eyes were already looking hollow and dull, the King of Vices continued while facing the sky, as though to look up at god.

「If someone doesn't continue to stand on the side that rules.....one day it will be their fate to have everything taken away. I'm not wrong, until the end, I didn't let myself, become anyone's prey.....anymore.」

「——」

With that muttering at the end, her whole body became ash and decayed.

Airi who was standing beside him suddenly stared at the corpse with sad eyes.

「Perhaps, this person too was used by someone in the past.」

「Yes.....」

As a part of the imperial family of the Old Empire, and then as someone who was banished from the imperial court, it wasn't like he didn't understand the

feelings of the King of Vices.

Someone who was wounded in the world of betrayal and schemes where it was eat or be eaten would try to stand at the side of the strong so that they wouldn't be used anymore.

There was no more way for them to know about what happened in this girl's past, but they felt a slight sympathy.

And then, they thought that her words also had truth in it.

It might be just as she said.

〔Someone who wasn't loved by anyone, will try to be loved by anyone.〕

Callesia's last words became a stimulation that resurrected Fugil's words in the back of his mind.

Even Lux thought that it might be true for a time.

And then that—was rejected by the King of Vices just now.

If Lux was fighting because he wanted to be recognized by the people, then perhaps someday he would get used and cause him to fall—but, 「Nii-san! That's—!」

「-.....!？」

Airi raised a nervous voice and pointed to the sky.

Over there was a golden spherical body with diameter that reached more than ten mel—

The surface possessed a great number of eyes, and pure white wings were growing from its body in many pairs. A monster of an angel.

The Ragnarok of the first Ruin Babel—Metatron was looking down below.

—

「—Manifest, the violent dragon that devours the flesh and blood of the gods. Sever the sky of black cloud, Bahamut!」

—

Lux immediately lifted up his Sword Device and equipped the jet black Drag-

Ride.

At the same time, as though to say that she had been waiting for it, Noct stretched out a cord from her Drake and connected it to Bahamut.

「Please wait for around ten seconds. I will transfer the internal energy I have gathered up from Sharis and Tillfur's Drag-Rides into Lux-san's Bahamut. Originally Lux-san will only be able to fight for three minutes, but with this you should be able to move for around five minutes.」

It seemed that the Triad who were fighting defensively one-sidedly since before this were working hard so that they could increase Bahamut's activation time even if only for a bit more.

Right after Lux glared at the dark cloud preparing to intercept the enemy, a Dragon Voice from Lisha could be heard.

『—Be careful Lux! No attack will work on this guy! Whether it's physical attack or any kind of energy attack, everything will get absorbed and reflected back!』

Along with that desperate yelling voice, Lisha and others, the four members of Syvalles appeared together.

Lisha, Krulcifer, Celis, Yoruka.

Although they somehow still maintained the materialization of their Divine Drag-Rides, everyone was wounded all over with ragged armor.

It could be seen that they had no spare strength to fight properly.

「These four people together still couldn't win, such thing—」

Tillfur looked up to the sky with a despairing expression, while Sharis and Noct also held their breaths.

But, Lux calmly glared at the calamity class demon.

And then first he quickly faced the girls and gave the very best instruction he could.

「Please take Philuffy and Airi to retreat. I will take over here.」

He entrusted the girls to the Triad and skated Bahamut towards the sky.

After he climbed up to a height where he could take an unbroken view of Triport, Metatron's countless eyes captured Lux's figure.

「Please be careful Lux! The enemy will fire laser beams from its eyes!」

- Giin!* Just as Celis said, its eyes shined and fired heat ray energy.

Lux used his great sword as a shield and blocked it. When the attack was over he unleashed his gathered energy.

「—Howling Howl-!」

It was a perfect timing that aimed at the moment the enemy's attack ended—but, Metatron's whole body shined faintly. The vortex of shockwave vanished and immediately after it was reflected towards Lux.

「.....Ku!?」

Even while enduring the power of the attack he released himself, Lux was observing the enemy's state calmly.

Among the countless eyes covering that enormous body, he saw that there was only one eye that was crushed.

「That's, how is that—!? Why is only one of its eyes wounded.....!」

「We don't know. When everyone attacked it frantically, my sniping pierced it through. —There should be some kind of secret about it!」

Hearing Krulcifer's voice made Lux arrive at a certain hypothesis instinctually.

It was an imagination that he could think of exactly because he had accumulated several thousand battle experience from mock battles until he was called with the nickname The Weakest Undefeated.

Perhaps his idea was mistaken.

He might fail, get wounded, and then lose.

But even so—this hint came from none other than the girls who tried to leave behind a light of hope for Lux that they stayed behind even in their worn out state.

And then, Lux's belief that was denied by Calensia was taken back by Philuffy

for him.

I wasn't fighting until now in order to be loved by someone.

「—I fight, because of my admiration.」

Philuffy who was in a position that possessed no power whatsoever, saved him who was in hell after losing his mother.

He thought that he couldn't do anything for the country because he was the youngest child of the imperial family, however Philuffy was different.

She saved him simply with her kindness and feeling. He admired her nobleness and beauty.

That was why—no matter what anyone said, he wouldn't hesitate anymore.

Lux's true essence as a Drag-Knight.

His power of concentration that had been polished until the extreme was moving him to the very best action.

That attack was developed not by logical thought, it was as though his body was naturally guiding him.

(A timing where the attack works exists, if my hypothesis is correct, if I'm to aim at that moment—it can only be, this!) 「Howling Howl.....!」

Energy was concentrated at the inside of the armor and a vortex of shockwave was fired once more.

「That's no good Lux! Like that it will be reflected again!」

「You're wrong, Lizsharte-san. Aruji-sama's aim, is likely—」

Right after Lisha yelled, Yoruka corrected her with a bewitching smile.

Yoruka who possessed natural talents for battle seemed to notice it.

The absolutely invincible Ragnarok who absorbed every kind of enemy attack and returned it back to the enemy exactly as it was.

If there was a situation where an attack could work on it, that was—

「—HAAAAAAAAAAaAAH!」

Lux took a deep breath, and activated Bahamut's Divine Raiment with his

whole soul.

The timing of an instant where failure wouldn't be permitted had been ascertained with the first Howling Howl attack.

The activation of Divine Raiment with high output and wide range.

Lux's new technique that was brought about by his bond with Celis, the barrier of Reload on Fire was deployed.

The barrier covered a side of Metatron that was floating in front of him. It absorbed Lux's Howling Howl and then shifted to reflect it back, but its movement was decelerated and stopped.

In other words, attacks would work on it only in this instant that was even less than a second.

Using Bahamut's Reload on Fire, the speed of the attack reflection was decelerated. At that timing, the great sword Lux thrust out pierced Metatron.

「——GIIIIIIIIiiIIIIiiIIII!」

While the Ragnarok was raising a shriek that sounded like a scream, Lux operated his back wings propulsion device in full power and charged through inside its body in a straight line.

Even with the barrier and pilot suit protecting his body, heat that felt scorching to his whole body was enveloping him. Even so he didn't stop.

Just by thinking of Philuffy, and then his comrades from the Academy, his last strength welled up.

(Thank you—everyone.)

And then, there was a sensation of breaking through a membrane with hard resistance. Right after that, Lux pierced through to outside the spherical body.

There was a definite response of piercing the core.

Lux turned around and readjusted Bahamut's posture. Almost at the same time—that enormous body exploded and burning fragments danced in the air.

It was like countless falling stars were illuminating the night sky of despair. They were silently burning to ash.

From inside the blown up Ragnarok, a crystal—the Grand Force fell out. Lisha caught it.

Everyone of Syvalles landed down on the ground. Even after they dispelled their armor and gathered, they immersed themselves in the aftetaste of the battle for a while.

「—It's over huh, Lux.」

「Yes. Thanks to everyone.」

When Lisha held out the crystal with a relieved smile, Airi and the Triad who were hiding to protect themselves rushed towards Lux in a hurry.

「Are you okay, Nii-san!?」

Lux caught Airi who was jumping at him into his embrace, then a smile naturally formed on his lips.

「Yes. Thanks to the Triad sharing their energy with me, I can stay awake like this.」

「I see, that's great. Then, let's treat this as Lux-kun owing us a favor.」

「Wait, you are saying that in this kind of situation-!?」

Lux spontaneously yelled at Sharis's mischievous talk.

He was sighing in relieve that they seemed to have more spare energy than he thought, but next Tillfur also put her arm around his shoulder.

「Thaat's riight. After all even though we also wanted to unveil our new weapon, yet we generously conceded the best spot to Lux-chi!」

「No. I judged that we merely mistook the timing to use it. Besides, there is still one issue that we haven't solved—」

「Wai-!? What are you saying Noct, I told you that's still a secret—」

Noct retorted to Tillfur who was proudly boasting. A lively laugh was spreading to everyone.

「You girls are just like always—but, with this my failure has been settled.」

The Campus Festival around half a month ago.

Even this incident that began from a connection with Rosa was finally closing its curtain.

Rosa Granhide who was able to escape from Callesia's control was being guarded by Coral.

Lux was reported to the alliance as an assassin sneaking into Heiburg, but surely she would give proof of his innocence.

「Even so it's a bit unfortunate. We too believed that we have grown stronger considerably but—in the end we completely relied on Lux-kun again.」

Krulcifer coolly brushed up her hair and muttered that jokingly.

In response, Lux shook his head and told his current feeling honestly.

「No, you are wrong Krulcifer-san. This time I was able to defeat the Ragnarok thanks to everyone lending me strength, also, Philuffy was.....」

She stopped him when he was caught in the evil designs of Heiburg's King of Vices and he almost took the wrong path.

She gave the answer to Lux's doubt that was budding from this time and five years ago when the Old Empire was destroyed.

Next time even if he confronted Fugil again, he wouldn't be in doubt anymore.

He would only fight holding the belief that was taught to him by her who was closer to him more than anyone.

「It's Phi-chan, right?」

Philuffy was objecting while leaning unsteadily on Lux, her expressionless face seemed to be a bit dissatisfied.

「A, at this kind of time it should be fine right!? That's, the atmosphere feels serious like this—」

Lux's cheeks flashed red and he objected, but Philuffy was discontent and faced aside with 'puih', 「Lu-chan, is cold. Even though, I helped you a lot during the honeymoon.」

The moment she muttered that casually, everyone around was provoked.

「Wha wha wha what did you say-!? Even though I heard it was only an act just for form's sake, don't tell me you—!?’

「It seems it's necessary to hear the details. To act like that while disregarding me the fiancée.....」

「It's a misunderstanding Lisha-sama! Or rather, Krulcifer-san too, that's wrong right!? How did it become a formal betrothal like that!?’

「Lux!? Yo, you have joined together with her!? N, no, i, if it was Lux himself who was wishing for that, then it's not like I can say anything about it but—uu」

Celis who said such thing was hanging her head down with a depressing aura strangely enveloping her.

When he reflexively looked at Yoruka looking for help, she burst into a smile and stared at Lux.

「It was worth it to endure myself from chasing after Aruji-sama to serve as your guard. It will be great if a successor is safely made—」

「Why are you pouring oil on fire at the very end-!?’

Everyone who was lit on fire by Yoruka's saying questioned Lux all at once.

「Haa, really. Everyone is a troubling person just like usual.」

Soon the coldness of winter would be intensifying.

Airi was looking up deeply at the freezing night sky while letting out a white sigh.

Part 13

On the other hand, around the same time.

The royal capital of the New Kingdom, Lordgalia. Inside the royal palace there, a strange ship with streamlined shape was mooring.

That thing that was staying at the courtyard was a prehistorical legacy that was called Sky Palace.

It was called an airship that could float in the air and swam through the sky, it was recognized by the world alliance as the dwelling of the Lords as well as a vehicle that could travel around.

Because the Lords needed to be involved with the conquering of the remaining Ruins, they were preparing this in order to fly around to the Ruins in every country.

Inside it, in the space inside the ship that was made from smooth metal, the silhouettes of four people were standing.

One of them was the first imperial princess of the Holy Arcadia Empire, Listelka.

In addition, was her imperial knight, Fugil.

Then the maid Mishis V Xfer.

And then—even the second imperial princess, Aeril Vi Arcadia was there.

The tops of the Lords faction who were the rulers of the old era were all there, talking to each other about the present abnormal situation.

「My deepest apologies, my princess. Like this, I was unable to predict their movement early. Please punish me as you see fit.」

Fugil who was wearing an extravagant red cloak first said that to his master and awaited her judgement.

But, in contrast Listelka shook her head slightly and brushed up her beautiful silver hair.

「No, the case this time is my blunder. Their battle with Metatron should be a few days from now in the plan, and we also dealt with the Dragon Marauder that appeared nearby. Though thanks to that, it became a little troublesome.」

Saying that, the girl let out a lamenting sigh looking as though she was troubled from the bottom of her heart.

Originally, the liberation of Ruins was an important groundwork for arriving at Avalon.

But regardless of the accomplishment of conquering one of the Ruins, the situation was being guided to a different direction from their plan.

「Because of him, the trick of the Ruin might be suspected. If it's not by us, the clan of the Lords, Grand Force cannot be placed at the deepest part of the Ruin. But, how does that Singlen know about that? Even though there should be no more humans alive who know about that in this era.」

Beside Listelka who was tilting her head in confusion, the second imperial princess called Aeril was observing Fugil's behavior.

She was trying to ascertain some kind of reaction from him, but it was as though he wasn't showing suspicious behavior at all.

(Am I just over thinking it? However..... I'm feeling some kind of apprehension in my chest.)

In front of the conflicted Aeril, her elder sister suddenly turned her face.

「It's also unfortunate that Aeril didn't make it in time. In the end, you were unable to obtain any clue about Dragon Marauder from the King of Vices correct?」

「—Yes. But, I noticed something strange. Sir Singlen was lurking in a place where he could help in defeating that Metatron, but he intentionally let Lux Arcadia take the credit. That means the possibility that he understands our situation is high.」

「Is that so, in any case this is troubling. I want to do this as amicably as

possible, but if by any chance he installed more than two Grand Forces, then we will have to make him disappear.]

The usual gentle atmosphere vanished from Listelka. She was showing an expression of bottomless darkness.

「Let's observe their movement with even more prudence. We don't want to stand out, but in the next Ragnarok subjugation, we also have to participate and manage the situation.]

Listelka nodded at the words of the maid called Mishis.

Beside her, the second imperial princess Aeril was seized by a baffling thought.

(Why did Singlen hand over the achievement to him.....? Even though he should have failed in winning over Lux Arcadia, don't tell me—!?)

An uneasy imagination was born inside her chest.

The art of manipulating people wasn't limited to just using a strong authority.

By giving a helping hand to one's own enemy, one could guide their movement.

Something was moving behind the scenes.

She was feeling such uneasiness in her chest while looking down silently.

Epilogue – New Opening of Hostilities

Part 1

The destruction of the world by Sacred Eclipse that was prophesied to happen five months later.

Before that, the series of dangers that were approaching the New Kingdom finally came to an end.

The captured Servants had horn flutes in their possession and they confessed about their part in attacking Triport.

Furthermore, with the testimony of Rosa Granhide regarding the King of Vices, the world alliance judged that the case this time came from the internal strife of Heiburg.

An official that was selected by the alliance entered Heiburg for investigation and the situation calmed down while aiming for normalization.

In the international conference that gathered the representatives of every country, it was decided that it would be bad if the matter was aggravated under this situation where every country had to cooperate with each other. It seemed that it was decided that Rosa's action would be monitored and restricted, but she would return to her seat as one of the Seven Dragon Paladins like before.

In the first place, she was someone who was threatened by Callesia and forced to act evil.

It seemed that it was the truth that a backroom dealing with Dragon Marauder was really taking place, but Heiburg had already severed its ties with them and no proper clue could be obtained.

And then—

「You have worked hard on this occasion, my lover. Did you have fun on the trip with my favorite pupil? Hm?」

The woman who possessed both the appearance of a young girl and a mature atmosphere.

Magialca who ordered the infiltration mission this time was whispering to him with her lips crooked obscenely.

Inside the hidden room underground the Academy's library.

Countless bookshelves were lined up like a labyrinth. Inside the room made from stone that was surrounded by a fireplace, work tables, and experiment utensils, she was listening to Lux's report.

「I'm sorry that I couldn't be present when Babel's Ragnarok appeared. If that Heiburg lot didn't lie about the date when they would arrive at the deepest part, I would come as reinforcement but—. When you are an owner of a large company, there will be various circumstances.」

「I'm not really bothered by that though—」

「Is that so? No no, don't be so reserved, let me console your tired body. Now, if it's now there won't be anyone looking at this place you know?」

Magialca who liked men that was child faced with feminine features was sending Lux a bewitching smile while licking her lips.

「.....Phi-chan is waiting for me outside the door though?」

When Lux tried to evade her invitation with a really conflicted expression,

「Oh my, that will make me even more excited though!Don't make that face. I was just joking a bit, chih!」

She was clicking her tongue without even trying to hide it while averting her gaze.

After Lux was sighing in exasperation, she pulled herself together and straightened her posture.

After all, prosecuting Heiburg as a traitor had lost its meaning.

Dealing with this matter secretly without letting it get leaked to the Lords would be less problematic.

「Even so, I heard that you had placed the Grand Force inside Babel but, did anything strange occur?」

「.....No, from what I could see, there was nothing particularly strange—」

「I see.」

Her messing around attitude until now changed completely. Magialca was staring at Lux seriously.

But, at this time Lux was lying.

After everything was over, what Lux saw with Grand Force in hand was—

—

Lux was heading towards the highest floor of Babel where the outer wall was destroyed because he saw someone's silhouette.

The man that was clad in the bottomless atmosphere of a powerful warrior that equaled his eldest brother Fugil.

The representative of the Blackend Kingdom, the vice captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins, Singlen Shelbrit.

His dark and deep black eyes that was like a swamp without bottom, and his haughty bearing, they were worthy of the alias of Blue Tyrant.

But, in the series of incidents that surrounded Babel this time, he shouldn't be involved at all.

「What is your intention? Why are you here?」

「Oh, how unfriendly my compatriot. I'm the vice captain of the Seven Dragon Paladins where you are also a member. Even though I had hastened here when the New Kingdom was in danger.」

「Enough with the pretension! I'm asking what is your true objective!?」

What Singlen was wearing, was a Divine Drag-Ride with a form that would remind anyone of an enormous sea dragon—Leviathan.

But, right now Lux was also on guard while wearing Bahamut.

He had no spare strength to fight properly, but he must not get pressured even then.

「Fuh.....」

Singlen grinned scornfully at the defiant Lux and pierced Lux with a provocative gaze.

Lux had an idea of what that could mean.

Rosa was ordered by the King of Vices to destroy the partitioning wall of the room a floor below—the place where Metatron was staying. She was commanded to liberate the Ragnarok.

Even though Rosa was stopped from doing that, for some reason Ragnarok was still liberated.

「Was that, your work? You used Heiburg's scheme, to make the New Kingdom—」

「Oo, scary scary. Don't give me such unjust suspicion, hero-sama. It's only that I have my own objectives, several of them.」

His throat quivered slightly, and the face under the hood made a crooked grin.

「Even so, I underrated you. Originally, I wanted to save you all from your predicament and make you owe me, but of all things, the Ragnarok was defeated with just you all. Although, you all must be unable to move properly for a while after that.」

「——」

He was seen through.

The accumulation of fatigue inside Lisha and the others who were exposed to constant battle against the Abyss for these two weeks, wouldn't recover that easily.

Starting from Philuffy's Typhon, the Divine Drag-Rides of everyone were terribly damaged until now.

「Oops, don't glare at me with that kind of eyes. I gave you some help you know? Whether it was making the conquering of this Babel faster than planned, and also guiding you to here—」

Singlen who said that suddenly turned his back on him and started walking deep into the room.

Although it was the summit of Babel, the space was quiet wide, so from his position he couldn't see everything.

Inside where the light of the Ruin was illuminating the place, there was something unexpected lying on the floor.

「—!? This is!」

That was the remains of a girl with its four limbs and neck severed into pieces.

Lux immediately glared at Singlen, but the person in question jerked his chin to point at it as though it wasn't anything special.

「What a cowardly man when you are just simply facing a corpse. Look carefully, that thing isn't human.」

「This is—the Automata of Babel!?」

The Gear Leader that was managing the Ruin.

The automatic machine that swore obedience to the commands of the blood relatives that was Xfer and to the Lord.

As though to be proof of that, a something like the sensation of ant was growing in that head that had stopped working completely.

(But why!? Why is she destroyed until this far?)

In contrast with Lux that was standing still half dumbfounded, Singlen was continuing to walk.

「Your face is saying that you don't understand anything huh? Let me give you a warning from my kind heart. Next time if you happen to see this thing, destroy all of them. These guys will resurrect after some time passed, but like this they cannot be aware of us for a while.....these guys are insurance for the Lords. If we don't beat them to the punch and destroy them, sooner or later

something that cannot be undone would happen.]

「What are you saying? What are you doing, Sir Singlen!？」

The perplexed Lux yelled, but Singlen didn't answer that question and simply returned a fearless smile.

「More importantly, quickly put the Grand Force. With that the conquer of this Babel will be completed. After all, one of the switches to pass to Babel will be inserted with that.」

「.....」

When Lux was hesitating from his vigilance, Single dispelled his armor.

It was a display of intention that he wouldn't do anything like stabbing him in the back. With that, Lux inserted the crystal into a hollow at the deepest part of the room.

「Aah, that's right—give the command [lock] while holding out the crystal in your hand. With that, this Babel will become unable to receive other interference. This city will also stop getting exposed to the danger of the Abyss anymore.」

「——」

For an instant Lux got suspicious whether he was getting deceived, but after worrying about it, he tried thinking [lock] in his mind.

.....*Goun!* Along with such vibration, the Babel was shining faintly and the presence of the Abyss was pulling back.

With this, following after the Arc and Gigas, the capture of the third Ruin was completed.

There were four remaining, including the Moon which whereabouts were unknown. They had to defeat four more Ragnarok.

「Now then, perhaps you have noticed it vaguely but—, there is only three Ragnarok remaining.」

Singlen casually declared that to Lux who was breathing out in relieve after finishing the task.

「What, do you mean?」

「Aah, there is no need to play dumb. There are only the two of us here. But, if this fact leaked out from somewhere, the new kingdom will be pushed into a predicament.」

「.....」

「Farewell chore prince. One day I'll have you cooperate with a certain matter. Don't worry, you will have no choice to listen to me whether you like it or not then, as long as you are aiming to become something like a hero for this country that is.」

Singlen sent him a grin with eyes of bottomless darkness and pulled out a different Sword Device. He equipped a Wyvern and left.

The Grand Force that Saniya was searching for in the Academy in the past.

Now that it was mentioned, Lux wondered how the New Kingdom obtained it.

If Singlen knew about it—

—

「Are you listening, Lux?」

「.....Eh. Ah, yes!」

Lux who was immersed in his thought returned to his senses from Magialca's voice.

「In any case, you have worked hard this time. Here, the thing I promised.」

When he noticed, in front of him Magialca was holding out something that was wrapped with a red cloth to him.

While he was staying in Heiburg, he was asked about the reward he wanted through the Triad.

He was told that he would be given anything he liked from among the merchandises that Magialca handled. And this was what Lux wished for.

「Just as you asked, the design is the same like the thing from the Academy. I had it made with the highest quality.But, you too are actually a man without greed. Are you satisfied with something like this?」

「Yes. Thank you very much.」

Lux confirmed the item that he received and he smiled in satisfaction.

The content was the replacement for the sword belt that was broken at the same time when the lock on his Sword Device was destroyed in the battle against Rosa.

Lux wrapped that thing that was made from brand new and smooth leather around his waist, while he wrapped the remaining sword belt inside the cloth.

「Fuh. You are still motivated to fight huh. The world is in this state, but your body won't hold if you don't rest for a bit. And so, how about it? If you like, you can rest for a while in my villa with just the two of us—」

Magialca displayed a bewitching smile and traced her fingertip slowly on Lux's back.

「Wai-!? What are you doing!?」

Lux's face turned bright red and he jumped back. Right at that moment, the door behind him opened and Philuffy showed her face.

「Lu-chan, is troubled. I'll stop master.」

「.....-!? Phi-chan!?」

Philuffy who had recovered somewhat was taking stance quietly in front of the door.

「.....Hohou, you are raising your fist against your teacher? I'm not going to be merciful even while you are weak right now.」

「Then, we'll run. Bye bye, master.」

The moment Magialca responded fearlessly, Philuffy carried Lux beside her like a bag and quickly ran outside.

「Well, this time I'll concede it to my cute student.」

Magialca was grinning fearlessly while seeing off Lux and Philuffy.

Lux and Philuffy escaped from the underground room while feeling the gaze of the dissatisfied woman on their backs.

Part 2

「Wai-, let me down Phi-chan! It's fine already!」

When they returned until the courtyard, Lux asked that in panic.

After Philuffy let him down, Philuffy looked at the sky under the gentle sunlight.

Because it was early in the morning on a rest day, the presence of people in the Academy was still few.

Lux was breathing in the tranquil and clear air while facing Philuffy once more.

「Thank you for this time. —And also, many thanks. Thanks to Phi-chan coming together with me, I was saved.」

Since five years ago, after the revolution in the Old Empire failed, Lux was harboring pain in his chest.

When Heiburg's King of Vices carried out her scheme, he was saved thanks to Philuffy.

And then, she protected Lux by even going as far as using power that surpassed her limit.

At first he was also worried about what would happen on that honeymoon trip, but—

「It was really fun. Somehow, it was like we were returning again to that time when we played together.」

It might be an imprudent thought, but that was his honest feeling.

There was also tough times, but through the trip with this girl who was his most trusted friend, Lux's thoughts were renewed.

He admired Philuffy's act. Him choosing the path of 『trying to save someone』

wasn't something false.

But at the same time, he was strongly wishing to spend peaceful days like this once more.

「I also, had fun.」

Within her usual expressionless face, there was a faint emotion of happiness oozing out. Philuffy smiled.

Her words themselves were few, but the happy tone that this absentminded girl showed caused Lux's chest to pound hard.

Lux ascertained the loneliness that this time was over and he faced her.

「After resting for a bit, it feels like the business of the Seven Dragon Paladins will get busy again, so I don't know if I will be able to stay in the Academy that often but—」

Although she was a member of Syvalles, in the end she was nothing more than a student of the Academy.

Perhaps there wouldn't be that many chance for her to accompany him in the dangerous missions that was related to Ruins from here on.

For Lux he would be able to have a peace of mind like that, but at the same time he also felt loneliness.

「When this battle is over, I will be able to be together with Phi-chan again. That's why, until then—」

That was why, he prayed that he would be able to spend a peaceful time with her once more. He was going to tell her that.

But, Philuffy looked still at Lux's face with sleepy eyes, then she shook her head.

「I, asked Onee-chan to let me take absent for a bit from her work.」

「Eh.....?」

「The plan is for me to go back to the work of secretary trainee again when the trip with Lu-chan this time is over, but—, I told Onee-chan, that I'll be Lu-chan's bodyguard for a while.」

Philuffy's future after graduation.

The talk was that she would accumulate training to be a secretary as well as a bodyguard for Relie who had the responsibility as headmaster and as the leader of a conglomerate, but, 「But, I'm worried about Lu-chan. That's why, I want to be by your side protecting you, through the battle from here on too.」

She sent such straightforward eyes towards Lux and took his hand.

In a glance, this childhood friend looked like she had no initiative from herself, but actually she was thinking of various things for him.

And then she also possessed a strong will that once she decided something, she wouldn't yield and persist in it.

「Promise me. Even if the fight starts again, stay together with me. Because, I want to be by Lu-chan's side forever from here on too.」

That was why, Lux couldn't win.

There was no way he could refuse the proposal from this childhood friend who was kind and strong to the utmost.

And then—

「You see. Happy—birthday.」

Lux was looking slightly embarrassed while holding out the thing he was hiding.

Philuffy who saw that opened her eyes wide in surprise and blinked for a while.

「This is, a sword belt?」

He pretty much considered her personality and put a small embroidery of a flower on it, but it was without a doubt a sword belt to sheath a Sword Device.

It was for sheathing Typhon because its sword belt was also similarly destroyed like Lux's—.

There were also many things that he wanted to give as a present to her.

Whether it was the sweets that she loved.

Or perhaps expensive accessories.

However, this present was from his current feeling.

「You see, actually, I opposed the trip this time. I said that I don't want Phi-chan to get involved with a dangerous fight. That I only want you to be safe. But—」

He realized that it was mistaken.

He was conceited that if it was him right now who had become strong, then he would be able to shoulder anything by himself alone.

「I won't be able to accomplish my wish with only my strength alone. Perhaps someday I'm going to make a mistake again. That's why, because of that.....」

Lux hesitated slightly and squeezed out his true feeling.

「I want you to fight together with me. I want to borrow Phi-chan's strength again from here on.」

This new sword belt for Philuffy was filled with such wish.

The childhood friend stiffened just for a bit hearing Lux's request to her that he wanted her to fight at his side.

After that, a warm sensation suddenly wrapped Lux's body.

Philuffy's both arms firmly and strongly embraced Lux.

「Wai-!? Wha, what are you doing Phi-chan!? The present isn't me—, it's this sword belt I'm telling you!?!」

The soft sensation of her whole body and the beating of her heart caused Lux to spontaneously feel shaken and his body jerked.

But, Philuffy's atmosphere was telling him that she wouldn't let go no matter what. Her lips slackened just slightly.

「Nn.....I know. But, I'm happy.」

「Eh?」

「Because, Lu-chan listened to my wish, so I'm happy.」

「.....-」

She wanted to protect Lux.

She wanted to fight at Lux's side, in order to support him.

The feeling of this girl who was giving him a push on his back so that he could fight just as he wished, made his chest feel hot.

No matter what would happen in this remaining five months, he would be able without hesitation—.

「I promise. Because I'm still borrowing Phi-chan's strength.」

Philuffy nodded and held out her pinky in front of him. Lux also held out his pinky while hiding his embarrassed feeling.

The exchange that was unchanged since their childhood.

However, even though it was the same something was different.

Lux smiled at her while immersing himself in this feeling where they thought of each other and wished to be together.

「Thank you, Phi-chan.」

The two were basking in a warm atmosphere at the courtyard where the sun was shining.

While the days until the world destruction came were shortening, Lux obtained something definite within his hand.

Part 3

While Lux and Philuffy were exchanging a promise in the courtyard, a girl in black clothes was walking silently on a stone paving.

「There is no problem with the testing of that function.」

The fourth Drag-Ride hangar inside the Academy ground.

She sneaked in at the time when even the Academy's mechanics hadn't come and stared at her own Drag-Ride Yato no Kami.

In addition to the three hidden techniques of Drag-Ride control that Lux developed, she also possessed a special move called Instant Strike, but—, she felt that it was still not enough with just that and she practiced a new strength against the Servants.

The result was superb. Finally she found a prospect of victory.

「As I thought, that man shouldn't be left alive, for Aruji-sama's sake too.」

Yoruka wondered to herself like that with a natural tone as though she was talking about weather.

Yoruka overheard the conversation that was exchanged between Lux and Singlen at the top floor of Babel and she was convinced.

She didn't understand about Singlen's motive itself.

But, she felt that he was scheming to make use of Lux in some kind of shape before discarding him.

Yoruka who was able to feel a person's presence to an oversensitive degree was convinced of that from coming into contact with Singlen several times.

It was just like that time, when her little brother was betrayed and killed by his chief vassals.

「Thinking back, in this academy.....I did nothing but things that doesn't suit

me.]

As the Empire's Assassin Blade, she was missing human emotions since birth, in exchange she only possessed talent for battle.

Lux set his eyes towards such her and treated her like a human, just like her little brother in the past.

Airi and Noct also became her friends, and even Lisha would call out to her one way or another.

However—exactly because of that.

The more she lived in this Academy, the more she understood that she was an existence that shouldn't be here.

She understood that she was an unnecessary existence here.

The trust and feeling towards a human that in the past her little brother directed towards her in the nation of Koto.

Since the beginning she was made to recognize whether she wanted it or not, that she had nothing to give in return to those girls feelings.

「As I thought, for me, this side suits my nature more.」

When the repair of Yato no Kami's damage was finished this time, that would be most likely her last turn.

That man called Singlen wasn't a normal human.

It would be next to impossible to assassinate him even with Yoruka using all her strength, so she didn't make any move towards him, but if it was now it was possible.

If she didn't put her own life into the equation, then there was a thirty percent success rate for her to bring that man down.

「That's a good enough percentage. If the greatest obstacle for Aruji-sama can be defeated with just that—」

The next time that man tried to trap Lux and showed an opening, she would move to assassinate Singlen.

Keeping that determination in her heart, she left from that place like a

shadow without raising any sound.

Afterword

Good afternoon.

This is Akatasuki Senri who for the first time experienced a half page afterword due to the page circumstance. There is not much space so this time I want to write this afterword by cramming in the words (Greeting & apology).

The anime had also ended and I can take a break now. At this time, personally I feel like I want to submerge in loneliness, but the reality doesn't let up for even a bit, giving me a schedule where I feel like I'm dying as usual.

The reaction of the readers who increased from the anime, the listeners that enjoyed the drama CD, and the little anticipation for things like the event after the anime, I'm thinking to keep doing my best.

And the new series of such me will be published next month. The title is,

『The S-class noble sons is going, to the contracted rulers life in another world』 (temp).

Just as you can see it's another world story, but it will make me happy if you readers will read it along with Bahamut.